



Musings to Members



Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester

DICK PELLEK

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Dedication

*To my loving wife, Thu soul mate and companion of 51 years as
we continue our honeymoon that began in 1968.*

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Can We Remember? Do We Remember? Should We Remember?

People who think often about the past engage in subconscious peeking into their personal histories. They see flashes of happy times, stressful times, sad times, times of fear, and times of apprehension that just never get erased from their innermost thoughts. That petty indictment includes me, so the charge is about all of us. We are who we were.



photo taken circa 1944

It is all there—the good, the bad, and the ugly. But the world does not need to know everything, thanks to the principles of forgiveness and redemption. Today we are who we chose to be, strive to be, and hope to be. Let others judge what they see. As is often suggested, it is more important to consider where we are going than to dwell on where we have been. We may choose to tell all, or we may choose to share only the positive things. The choice is ours alone and the act of sharing can be selective.

In the most innocent approach to valuing memories, one avenue to appreciating the past is to produce a listing of judgment-free but lasting memories, starting from as early in life as we can recall. Do you recall anything from your own infancy? Can you recall anything from grammar school? How about a brief memory of each succeeding year of grammar school? And high school? College? Your first job? Your first flirtation?

The possibilities are endless, but it will require some daydreaming. If you do remember something, you can remember enough to share it in your legacy stories. Legacy stories are for others, and you are the best narrator for the job just because you were there as witness.

This short chronicle will surely be expanded, because the internal editor used by *LegacyStories.org* allows for expansion, clarification, and corrections. Story development is not only possible, it should be one rule used by serious story tellers who care about the content of their offerings. But reviewing a lifetime of memories is a daunting task and omissions are inevitable, thus this chronicle entry will be more like a project. A hint, however: Memories of a toddler; pre-school years; grammar school; high school highlights (by year); college; working years; military service; etc.

Time now to get started.

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Moss and Mumblety-peg

The game of mumblety-peg is so old that even Mark Twain mentioned it as one of the favorites enjoyed by young boys. It was outdoors, in the summer, and played in the grass. To do it right, it required a jackknife that could be opened both halfway and all the way, to take advantage of all the required configurations required in the unwritten rules of the game. Of course, young boys sometimes make up their own rules. Even how to pronounce it, lest you get a strange stare if you said anything other than mumbley-peg.

Growing up in Netcong, lots of boys had pocket knives. In fact, they were as common as cell phones are today, and nobody thought much about a boy having a jackknife in his pocket. The pocket knife was a friend and a helper, especially those fancy ones that had various tools that you find on the fabled Swiss Army knives.

Perhaps nobody gave it any thought, but there were circumstances about mumblety-peg and the venues that were taken for granted. Kids didn't play in the winter, early spring, or late fall. It was a summer game, played on dry grass. Better yet, on a nice level patch of dry moss. There, it could be determined at a glance if the blade was stuck in the ground, how deep it was, and whether or not it would stay. A mossy surface took the guesswork out of calculating lean and depth of blade penetration. And most times, moss was more pleasant to sit on than grass.

The young loner who only occasionally played mumblety-peg with neighborhood kids was not at a loss when he was alone, because he had a nice patch of moss right next to his house, and he spent many summer hours enjoying his mossy, shaded mumblety-peg stadium as both defending champion and as an up-and-coming contender in mumblety-peg competition. His jackknife didn't take sides and the loser of the competitions didn't complain when he lost.

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Are You Bragging Or Complaining?

This chronicle is for you, Red Lee. You are in the center of that mental photograph that flashes in my mind, since that day in early autumn of 1955 when you responded to a comment from one of your students in Physics class. At this stage, some 60+ years later, I can't remember what it was that Gus Andico said, but I do remember you, standing there in your grey trousers and with one foot perched on the plain wooden chair next to your desk. Maybe Gus was remarking about hitting only .385 last season, or maybe it was about something else. But you broke out into one of your semi-smirks and retorted, "are you bragging or complaining?" That sunlit scene and that relaxed attitude in Physics class are some of the details that color that mental photograph.

Just today, the **Footloose Forester** saw something in one of the social network sites on the Internet that reminded him that other situations could easily bring up the question, "are you bragging or complaining?" The issue was whether the First Lady of the United States really spoke eight languages. Some supporters in the back-and-forth online dialogue noted that she spoke eight languages—a flattering accomplishment. Several respondents in opposition to that proposition noted that she did not really speak eight languages, but only claimed that she did. A little research would show, by the way, that she claimed only five languages and they are Slovene, English, French, Serbian, and German.

The impetus for this chronicle that harkens back to the sunlit Physics classroom of Red Lee in Netcong High School was really the tagline, "are you bragging or complaining?" Was FLOTUS bragging about her language skills? Did the discrepancies between five languages and eight come about through shameless promoters? Were those online opponents of her long-ago original claims complaining about the obfuscation regarding what having language skills really implies? To an embarrassed **Footloose Forester**, the issue is very personal.

Having studied eight languages at varying depths over the years, the **Footloose Forester** will forever remain embarrassed in admitting that he does not speak those languages to any degree of fluency today. Thus, in his mind, an important consideration that should be made before bragging about "speaking" a foreign language involves a brutally honest introspection and acknowledgment about one's fluency; in regard to speaking, understanding, reading, and writing that/those language(s). The **Footloose Forester** cannot brag about speaking French, Spanish, Portuguese, Indonesian, Urdu, German, Vietnamese, and Creole; he can only lament that despite having attended classes in them and subsequently using each of them in work and social situations, he was never fluent or even proficient. But do not take the circumstances as either bragging or complaining. Take

it as lamenting. Lamenting the fact that speaking a language may or may not lead to fluency and that studying a language seldom embodies all of the skills that constitute knowing a language. His erstwhile friends who studied Chinese through the East-West Center in Hawaii and then spent up to a whole year living in China (Taiwan) also lamented the fact that they could not even read the newspapers. Neither could the **Footloose Forester** read the Urdu newspapers in Pakistan. Take it on faith that the **Footloose Forester** will never brag about his fluency in foreign languages. But also take it on faith that he will do his best to grapple with language learning with an open mind.

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The Short Course Building

(The Helyar Experience)

People who visit social media sites are inclined to reminisce about the old days. They remember growing up in ____ or hanging out with ____ and the allure of the food in their favorite pizza shop. Nostalgia affects us all, but to various degrees. The frequent chronicler who calls himself the **Footloose Forester** is no different when it comes to harking back in time. His motives, however, are more aligned with the desire to connect with others, to communicate about the old days, the old gang, and the old places. He firmly believes that good communication is currently too spotty to serve everyone equally; and we should strive to make it as clear, concise, and efficacious as possible. The purposes of communication are, after all: **To Inform**, **To Instruct**, and **To Entertain**. All of us have, at one time or another, an unstated craving for all of those purposes. Furthermore, all of us can be satisfied when we share the information, the instruction, and the entertainment value during the communication process.

The purpose of this chronicle is to shine a light on an institution that was a literal home for the **Footloose Forester** when he was an undergraduate at Rutgers University. He is proud to mention that he was a part of the Helyar House tradition at Rutgers during the last two years of his undergraduate tenure. Helyar House was christened in 1968 as a modern student living facility offered by the university to a handful of agriculture students who come from families with limited financial resources. The ones lucky enough to become a part of such an on-campus living group would henceforth and unwittingly be assimilated into a bonding tradition similar to that of a college fraternity. In our case, it was a living and working arrangement that permitted us to stay in College of Agriculture buildings and to put in a nominal amount of work time each week doing farm related chores.

The first and most prominent building in the Helyar House satellite of living groups was a stand-alone farm house surrounded by actively cropped fields. It was the original building used as an assisted living venue in the 1930s and carried the name Phelps House. Its historical precedent and credentials included the fact that a person could see the Joyce Kilmer Oak from one of the second story bedroom windows. The new Helyar House was relocated to a different part of the campus in 1968.

As time passed, other venues were added to accommodate needy students under the umbrella of the Helyar House experiment. Indeed, the system was so impressive that in 1992 a book was written about it. **The Helyar**

Experience: Cooperative Living on the Agricultural and Cook College Campus of Rutgers University (Paperback-1992) by Bonnie J. McCay (Editor) explains the system and its history in detail.

One of the larger facilities was known as The Towers, a suite of second-story rooms above the laboratory of the Department of Entomology. The number of student residents was less than 10, but it was big enough to allow them to cook their own meals there. Taking turns doing the shopping and the cooking was part of the arrangement. Another living facility was in The Poultry Building, and ours was on the third floor of the Short Course Building where the **Footloose Forester** spent a couple of memorable years. No more than six students at a time lived there, but the cozy arrangement had a kitchen with a large table, sink, and stove where we fed ourselves year-round.



The Short Course Building was the best of the lot, in the opinion of the **Footloose Forester**, because it allowed us the opportunity to use the adjacent and vacant offices intended for grad students as our own study areas, as well as the empty classrooms on the second floor. As fate would have it, that second floor also housed the Department of Forestry. As a forestry student, the **Footloose Forester** took several classes there: Forest History, Dendrology, Wood Technology, Forest Management, Silviculture, Logging, and Forest Mensuration. He also took a course in Agricultural Economics in one of the classrooms on the first floor.

The classes were given during daylight hours but the rooms on the second floor were left open during evening hours and we students were free to use the desks and blackboards. The basement of the Short Course Building was also the place where the forestry tools (chain saws, axes, planting bars, etc.) were stored. Since the **Footloose Forester** had been assigned to maintain the tools and use them in the university wood lots, among his tasks under the cooperative living arrangement, he got to know the Short Course Building from top to bottom. He was even trusted to drive an official vehicle when going and coming to and from field operations. In retrospect, the Helyar Experience was very gratifying on many levels.

Looking back on those college days, the cooperative living arrangement as part of the Helyar Experience was the most satisfying adult period of a give-and-take existence that went beyond attending classes and enjoying the occasional sports and cultural events. We aggies were part of a scattered family. And what a family it turned out to be. The **Footloose Forester** can attest to knowing, during his time, at least six Helyar Experience alumni who later earned Ph.D. degrees and themselves became university professors. There must be many more because of the more than 900 alumni of the Helyar Experience, he recognized the names and knows of the faces of 32 other aggies who went on to distinguish themselves.



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Elk City Was Wild Enough

Remembering Elk City as it was does not serve any purpose in the present context. First of all, there now is a paved road (Idaho State Road #14) leading from the outskirts of Grangeville to Elk City and beyond. In the long hair days when **Footloose Forester** was a week-end visitor to Elk City, it was usually to sneak a beer or two from one of the two wild-west bars in town. He was a few months too young to buy beer on his own, but that was not a problem because anyone of legal age usually put a bottle in your hand, and nobody asked any questions. Make no mistake; Elk City was a bit too wild.

When a cowboy tried to ride his horse through the front door--that suggests wild. When someone else fired his rifle in the air in front of the bar, that was wild. When **Footloose Forester** was asked by the owner to put young Pete Byrum to bed because he was too drunk, and then **Footloose Forester** had to hoist Pete on his shoulders to make his way through the small crowd of revelers enjoying a shiverree, that was too wild. He does not remember the name of that place, but it was the one with the hitching rail, in the middle of town, in the old photos of Elk City he saw on the Internet.

There were two other "establishments" in town with hitching rails in front, and once, but only once, did **Footloose Forester** *watch delightedly as two cowboys dismounted and hitched their horses before entering the general store, six shooters showing from their holsters. By their looks, they probably were not working cow punchers, but* **Footloose Forester** still got a charge out of witnessing a scene that was soon to disappear forever. Just imagine: two cowboys dismounting at the hitching rack, tying clove knots with the leather reins and moseying into the general store. Yes, the horses had blanket rolls tucked neatly behind the saddles, but **Footloose Forester** cannot remember if they were wearing spurs, or not. Probably not, otherwise that memory would also have been etched in his mind.

We summer employees from east of the Rockies did not have much business in any of the unpainted store-front buildings because we had our meals provided. Food and lodging came out of our paychecks, so we accepted a fairly simple life style. **Footloose Forester** remembers opening his paycheck once and seeing that he cleared the princely sum of \$78 for the month. Good thing he never put money at the top of his list of things that he considered as most important in life. None of us had a car for the first couple of months, so we were all in the same boat and had the same outlook regarding getting around and doing things.

One time, however, somebody local offered to take a few of us to Red River Hot Springs, about 25 miles from Elk City and closer to the Montana border. The place was a small resort with a quaint hotel built of logs. Hot water gushing from the side of a hill was piped into a large hot tub at the resort, and was the big attraction. The water temperature at the intake pipe was 125 degrees. It quickly melted the soreness out of your muscles and made you sleepy, just the ticket after a hard work week. A few photos of Elk City, Red River Hot Springs and other places in the area can be seen on the world-wide web, but **Footloose Forester** *confesses that multi-aged photos do not evoke the same sense of reminiscence as the snapshots in his mind. The photos and the short stories that accompany them do, however, confirm that the small settlements within a 40 mile radius of Elk City never exceeded 400 people. The* latter-day stories also confirm that places along the Clearwater River like Golden, a mile or so from where **Footloose Forester** slept on a wide bend of the road one night, have been abandoned. There really are ghost towns in his memories, and now Golden, Idaho is one of them.

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You Remember Birdies and Eagles

One of the differences between daydreams and night time dreams is the simple proposition that daydreams are induced recollections and night time dreams are involuntary. We may awaken to recall something about the bizarre dream we had, but our conscious selves had nothing to do with why or how the dream came about. We often enjoy our daydreams precisely because they give us pleasure, and we can choose the topic. In between the involuntary dreams that are not always pleasant and the daydreams we hope to turn into pleasurable episodes, are those transition periods of semi-sleep when our minds search for a fond topic of our choice of a free-flowing dream.

Instead of counting sheep when he is seeking to fall fast asleep, the **Footloose Forester** often recalls the places and the circumstances of playing and watching golf around the world. He was fortunate enough to have ventured afar during his years, On the road...again!!! and thus had a long list of memories of golf courses in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the United States. He tried to remember the states and the countries where he had a golf club in his hand and to count them up before deciding which ones he wanted to dream about. In the process, he also discovered that he often conjured up thoughts of famous golfers he watched in the half-dozen tournaments he witnessed over the years. All in all, the list was long enough to make getting to sleep a very pleasant exercise.

Memories are always selective, thus the **Footloose Forester** must acknowledge that he sometimes does not immediately remember the name of the golf courses, or the country, or much about the individual holes. What he does remember are the birdies and the eagles. Selective memory, indeed! He had so few birdies over the years that his selective memory tended to focus on those rarities and ignore the double bogies that could be found on his scorecards. Eagles were even more rare, so much so that he recalled every one of them he ever had in his whole life. Hint: you can count them on one hand.

Another aspect of the dreamy recollections about golf has to do with famous golfers. It is not intended to be boastful about seeing Arnold Palmer, in person; but the **Footloose Forester** always wanted to mention seeing him score an eagle on two successive holes during the Hawaiian Open in the 1970s. The par-5 first hole under normal playing conditions had been designated as the 10th hole for the tournament, so when Arnold Palmer eagled the par-5 9th hole (normally the 18th hole), he proceeded to eagle the very next hole. Surely it was some kind of record. The **Footloose Forester** was privileged to see Arnold Palmer play at the Waialae Country Club in Hawaii, at Quicksilver in Pennsylvania and at the US Open in Oakmont, Pennsylvania. Seeing him hit his

approach shot from the fairway and then toward the green in the presence of Seve Ballesteros was a special scene. And witnessing the camaraderie of Ben Crenshaw, Jack Nicklaus, Hale Irwin, and Larry Nelson as they played together as a foursome during a practice round at Oakmont was a delicious soup that they cooked up themselves. One of them remarked, “how often do you see four millionaires playing golf together?” No, the **Footloose Forester** didn’t make that up. It was Ben Crenshaw. Special moments to lull you to sleep.

As a golfer himself, the **Footloose Forester** was never very good but was always happy to be on the golf course. Little wonder then, that he remembers many of the birdies he attained over the years; and all of the very few eagles. Sometime in the near future when he is again striving to drop off into dreamland, he will likely think about the birdies and the eagles at Hainault in England, at Oswestry in Wales, in Kenya, in Botswana, in Bophuthatswana; those hallowed holes at the Mindenhall Golf Course in Pennsylvania, and at the Golf Club de Saigon.

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Dreams Of Secret Pleasures Always Bring On Smiles

A few memories of delicious pleasures are stuck in the corners of his mind. Some are on the light side, while others are a bit darker. Everybody harbors them, but avoids bringing them into the light of day. That sometimes is a good thing. Sound mental health consists of acknowledging our shortcomings, our transgressions and our failings but.... but moving on is important. Not moving forward just might mean getting mired in the mud of our darker habits and shameful acts; and never becoming fulfilled as the people we would hope to be. Better to fall down, then get up; better to be knocked down, then get up; better to take a punch but know that we can absorb that punch.

No, this short chronicle is not going to be an open confession. It is more like an admission about some of the personal pleasures that he just didn't want to tell about, until now. First and foremost was about sneaking an extra 15 minutes of sleep. The occasion was so pleasurable, at the time, that the memory immediately became one of those that induces a smile whenever he recalls it. Here is how that memory evolved.

We were on the fire line in Northern California. The large and spreading fire was one of those that became so unpredictable that firefighters like us made no assumptions about how long it would take to get under control, or how long we as individuals would have to remain on the fire line until relieved. As was typical, after the first day of strength-sapping combat against live flames for 15-16 hours or so, the next day work schedules were assigned and we retired for the night. Our rest area was at the edge of a flat, dry pasture down the hill from the mess area/headquarters command post, nestled among the trees. The crew boss led the way to our sleeping area, announced a 05:15AM wake-up, and departed. When 05:15 rolled around, the crew boss was back and barking the wakeup call. The **Footloose Forester** was so tired that, although he saw all the others start to mill around, he rolled over and went back to sleep until 05:30. When he got up he was absolutely alone; but that extra 15 minutes sleep was so refreshing that, to this very day, he celebrates that memory.

As a bonus pleasure, when he got to the chow line, there was nobody in front of him and he immediately got a hot breakfast from a couple of his convict crew members from San Quentin. When the rest of the crew was ready to move out to the fire line, he was on-time and nobody even noticed that he had played catch up since rolling out of his sleeping bag. Secret Pleasure!

Another secret pleasure in a sleeping bag took place in Yosemite National Park--in the winter. He knew that people were not supposed to camp outside of designated campsites, so he decided to tick off an item on his bucket list and just not tell anybody about it. Early in March there were not many visitors to Yosemite, so that was the time he chose to journey there to lay out his sleeping bag. It was after dark when he surreptitiously unrolled his down bag. He avoided looking up, in anticipation of the coming thrill of a magnificent sight in the morning light. As the early dawn darkness faded away he opened his eyes to behold the sheer grandeur of Half Dome.

Most secret pleasures are purposeful forays into daydreams about dogs and cats that added such joy to his life. Others are about milieus to be found in nature, waiting to be experienced. The memories, the adventures and the joyous episodes were countless. He is happy to know that he can still close his eyes and dream; to dream of the secret pleasures that are always there.

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A Short Botanical History Of Home

We youngsters might have taken the trees for granted when we were very young, but as we grew older those trees around the house became keepsakes. The old Pellek homestead on Church Street in Netcong, New Jersey is a grassy plot these days but when he was growing up there, each of those trees had a place in his memory.

Starting from out the back door and to the left, the 35 foot black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) was the anchor tree on which Mom's clothes line was attached. The other end of the pulley was bolted to the side of the house, so when Mom had washed clothes to put on the line, she would step out of the house and attach the wet clothes with wooden clothes pins, yank the rope, and let them fly. We seemed to have so many dirty clothes in a household of nine, that the clothes line always seemed to be full right up the other pulley on the black walnut tree at the end of the property. Of course, there were walnuts that we scoured for in the late fall. There were never too many of them; and breaking open a native black walnut was so difficult that **Footloose Forester** can't remember harvesting more than two dozen in all those years. The other kids never showed any interest in handling walnuts because of the stubborn greenish stain they left on your hands and clothes.

Along the back line of the property facing out towards the wooded area that is now a parking lot behind St. Michael's Grammar School, the next tree was a large apple tree that had already died off and stood there without branches or a full top. It did contain an open wound at eye level where we could hide small toys. Only brothers Ronny and Joe were old enough to remember playing with **Footloose Forester** around its barkless frame. It rotted away before the other children grew up.

Coming down the property line from the big skeleton of the apple tree and near the property boundary that abuts St. Michael's School was a Bosc Pear tree. It got more attention than any of the other trees because in addition to being the most copious producer of fruit in the fall, it had a swing. A double rope swing in the earlier years was replaced by a single rope swing with an old tire as the seat. Dad installed both of the swings for us children and kids from the neighborhood sometimes joined us in taking turns swinging. We never saw Dad put up the ropes, but he saw to it that we always had a swing to play on. And picking the fruit was easy because there were so many pears. Of course we youngsters climbed the tree when we had to.

Next, came the other pear tree, near the other corner of the house. It was a Bartlett Pear that was only about 15 feet tall and had so few branches that it did not seem to be very healthy. But it was healthy enough to produce some good fruit every year for the 20 years or so that **Footloose Forester** remembers it, starting in the 1940s.

Also near the house was an American white ash tree (*Fraxinus americana*) that was Dad's favorite. It was close enough to the side of the kitchen window where Dad sat to eat his breakfast, that he eventually strapped an improvised bird feeding station around the tree, so that he could watch the birds feeding, especially in winter. The most successful and the most rewarding venture was when Dad tied pieces of suet to the feeder. Chickadees, sparrows and juncos would come and peck patiently at the suet strips that were at eye level. Their presence thrilled us just as much as an unexpected visit from old friends.

That white ash tree was the one that **Footloose Forester** climbed more often than all the others, except one. It was so close to the house that after reaching the second level of branches, you could drop onto the roof over the kitchen. Once in a while it was necessary to go up on the roof to repair a loosened roof tile, or to remove a broken branch, but mostly **Footloose Forester** climbed those trees to exercise his spirit of adventure and challenge. Mom knew that he was a loner and an adventurous type, so she usually asked him to go up on the roof when something needed attention.

Near the other corner of the house facing Church Street, there was another American White Ash, a tree that emerged from the ground with two slender boles from the same stump. As often as **Footloose Forester** appraised it as a challenge to climb, it did not hold any appeal because the upper branches were too small to hold his weight. The only thing he remembers about that white ash was how close it was to the house. Its root mass actually mounded up just a few inches from the side of the house, as if it was not planted there but grew up from seed from somewhere else and was never cut back.

Next to the sidewalk on Church Street in Netcong stands the larger of only two trees remaining from the old Pellek homestead. It is the Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*) in whose branches **Footloose Forester** spent many pleasant hours when he was growing up. Each session may have been only fifteen minutes or so, but he climbed it so often in ensuing years, especially in the late spring and summer when the leaves were full; that he considered it his own personal clubhouse. Tree climbing is an individual sport, thus he never felt compelled to invite any of the kids in the neighborhood to climb up with him. It was also more comfortable to spend time there because there were three places where he could stand or sit. He especially liked to watch the cars as they passed slowly by; or to sit quietly as people walked directly underneath. To this day, that maple trees spreads it shade beyond the property line and onto Church Street.



The Pellek House prior to 2002

Even when he was older and learning about nature through Boy Scouts, the **Footloose Forester** remembers trying to graft the scion of the Bosc Pear into the understock of the maple tree. He didn't really think that he was going to produce pears from the trunk of a maple tree, but he wanted to know if he could succeed in keeping the pear tissue alive with the cambial juices of the maple. It didn't work.

Completing the trace of tree plantings from around the outside of the property, the final one is another Norway Maple, up the street from his favorite Norway Maple. Its present age is known with certainty from 1949 or 1950 because **Footloose Forester** noted it when he and his brothers and neighborhood friends built a snow fort along the sidewalk; and we kept hitting its short skinny stem with our shovels. At that time it was no taller than eight inches and no thicker than a straw. Although it got completely buried under snow for the first several years of its life, we let it grow. As the years passed, it too, provided summer shade along Church Street. Today, at age 65 or so, it serves to shade cars in the upper parking lot of St. Michael's Church and makes Church Street a pleasant place to take a walk.

UPDATE (2018): The original chronicle about the short botanical history of our homestead was published in January 2014. After a trip back home in 2017, there are a few photos to add, thanks to the internal editing capabilities found in LegacyStories.org. The first photo below is the 68-year-old Norway Maple that was a scrawny little sapling in the early 50s. It got buried under the snow each year but finally emerged to be a handsome tree with pleasant shade.

The only other tree remaining on the old Pellek homestead now is the older Norway Maple that shows signs that major branches were sawn off. Both trees line the sidewalk on Church Street and were probably kept to maintain the aesthetics of their shade.

Due in large part to computer technology, history no longer has to be viewed as something dead and inert. A snippet of live history has been incorporated into this chronicle. Who knows what the next chapter will say?

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
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By Dick Pellek

Desolation Valley Wilderness Area, California

Haunting personal memories of the past are sometimes ugly ones, but in repeated exercises to maintain mental health, most of his preferred recollections induce smiles and pleasant thoughts. We all would rather remember pleasant things; thus the nostalgia of older folks most often is like a mental scrapbook of the good times. Memories of the Grey Wall are, in some ways, forbidding ones filled with scenes of darkness, desolation, and untamed winds. But the mental image of Desolation Valley in the Sierra Nevada Mountains is his standard by which the beauty of landscapes is measured; and it is under the shadow of the Grey Wall that the **Footloose Forester** hopes to spend eternity.

The Grey Wall does not appear on any map; it is the local name for the rocky divide that separates the upper reaches of the Silver Creek Trail that lead to the friendly environs of the heavily forested Wrights Lake area on the South West side; and the expanded region of bare rock in the Desolation Valley Wilderness Area, looking off in the direction toward Lake Tahoe. On a topographic map, the Grey Wall is an unnamed ridge spur of the Pacific Coast Trail that is one of the most popular ways to reach Desolation Valley Wilderness Area. In times past, Desolation Valley was beyond the ring of mountain passes of which the Grey Wall was part, but some 20-25 years ago the wilderness area was expanded to spill over into the narrow basin that includes Twin Lakes and Island Lake, both of which are only a few miles above Wrights Lake. Given the expanse of bare rock within that narrow basin that embraces both Island and Twin Lakes, the terrain there does resemble wilderness and fits nicely into the expanded wilderness scheme.

A hiker who loves the tall red firs and sugar pine trees of the shaded glades lower down the mountain can enjoy the whispering wind and more benign options on the Wrights Lake side. Approaching the Grey Wall and spilling beyond it, one finds rock, lake, more rock, whistling wind, more rock, and desolation. But its enchantment is so haunting, that the **Footloose Forester** still yearns for the sight of the place and the sounds of melt water rushing down the mountainsides.

The western slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains record the deepest annual snowfalls of any place on earth. There are places where there is more snow on the ground, such as in Antarctica, or the snowfields of Greenland, but those places of ancient glaciers have accumulated their snowfields slowly and steadily for centuries. In the Sierras the snow may melt each year, but snowfall each winter is normally very heavy. Thanks to the simplifications made by Austrian meteorologist Dr. Irwin Biel at Rutgers, he made those issues clear in his classes

in Meteorology 301, and especially in Climates of the USA 401. No wonder that the **Footloose Forester** wanted to add a trek into the snowy Sierras to his agenda of lifelong wanderlust. He got that opportunity when he was working in the Pacific District of the El Dorado National Forest in California. Thanks to the US Forest Service for providing him with the loan of a down sleeping bag and outer shell, he also got to sleep in the midst of a snow pack that was about 10 feet deep.



Island Lake: the Grey Wall is in the foreground

The memory was as sunny as the time he hiked from the snow line on the Wrights Lake Road to the upper reaches of the tree line, just below the Grey Wall. It was March and the air temperature was a balmy 70 degrees or so. As he climbed further upward toward the crest of the pass overlooking Desolation Valley, he knew that he would have to cross a raging Silver Creek, the only difficult obstacle on his trek in deep snow. He also knew if he got too wet while fording Silver Creek, drying off—even in the blessed sunshine—was not a sure thing before the sun went down. Fortunately, Silver Creek was not too deep, so he removed his boots, socks and pants and forded the stream while gingerly picking his way along a stony streambed. After air-drying his lower body, he retrieved his outer clothing from his pack and continued on his way. There was nobody around for several miles, so there was no need for modesty. The rest of the day was spent trudging through ever-deepening snow, to his anticipated camping site at the edge of timberline, at sunset. He still needed to pick out a suitable place to spend the night, but it was easier than he anticipated. The **Footloose Forester** spotted a huge rock that was elevated on all sides, thus affording some protection from wild animals, and was flat enough on top to allow him to spread out his sleeping bag to full length. Despite the 10 foot deep snow all around it, the top of the rock was devoid of snow. After cutting some fir branches to smooth out the rough surfaces of the rock, and to serve as a mattress, the **Footloose Forester** spent a peaceful and contented night inside the warm, toasty confines of his sleeping bag. And the view from the Grey Wall the following morning was spectacular.

Perhaps mortals subconsciously don't want to be forgotten after they die; one reason why cemeteries exist in all the nations of the earth. This mortal doesn't much care about his body, but would like his soul to be near the Grey Wall that rings Twin Lakes and Island Lake so that he can hear the whispering wind and the sounds of water trickling down the rocks and into Silver Creek. That is why, in his Last Will and Testament, he included a printed map of where he would like his ashes to be spread, with a red-line path on the map of how to get there. That place is on the trail at the outlet of Island Lake. When it is not covered in snow, you can see the trail at N38° 52' 11.89" and W120° 11' 34.09". July or August would be good months to go. The Wrights Lake area, the Grey Wall, and Desolation Valley captured his soul, and he would readily return his soul there for eternity.



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The New Fliegerhorst

The old Fliegerhorst Kaserne of World War II is becoming a modern housing complex. Based on the construction activity seen on the most recent Google Earth satellite photos, the old military barracks building that the **Footloose Forester** occupied in 1962-63 is undergoing a major facelift.



Stickpin marks location of my bunk on 2nd floor in a 2000 Google Earth photo

When the **Footloose Forester** was a young soldier stationed at the field headquarters of the 1st Missile Battalion, 39th Field Artillery some 60 years ago, we actually had very pleasant living conditions. Ours was an old Luftwaffe base known as Fliegerhorst, or the flyer's nest. It was originally designed as a training base for Luftwaffe glider pilots but late in the war it also hosted Ju-86 bombers. The US military took it over in 1945 during the post-war occupation.

Besides being a part of his own Army nostalgic history, Fliegerhorst was the place where President John F. Kennedy shared lunch with about 200 soldiers the day after his famous *Ich bin ein Berliner* speech in the summer of 1963. **Footloose Forester** was honored to be selected to represent his unit at the luncheon that was hosted at Headquarters Mess, 212th Artillery Group.

Google Earth is still the place to look for before-after satellite photos but even Google has to make room in their archives for satellite scenes of modern realities. Thus the Google Earth screen capture shown below barely resembles what it looked like in the 1960s, but at least documents the accurate latitude and longitude of the place where **Footloose Forester** shared a memorable lunch with JFK.



Barracks room on the second floor (yellow stickpin) was a short walk to lunch with JFK

In the 1960s there were more trees shading Fliegerhorst Kaserne and the surrounding area of farmland was much more extensive. Langendiebach was a picturesque small town, and in his mind it always will be.



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Fliegerhorst 2017

The old Fliegerhorst Kaserne of World War II is becoming more than a modern housing complex. Based on an updated review of the construction activity seen on the most recent Google Earth satellite photos, the old military barracks building that the **Footloose Forester** occupied in 1962-63 is undergoing a major facelift to include an airpark and office complex.



Stickpin marks location of bunk on 2nd floor in old Google Earth photo

It was originally designed as a training base for Luftwaffe glider pilots but from time to time housed He-111 bombers and late in the war it also hosted Ju-88 bombers. The US military took it over in 1945 during the post-war occupation.

Besides being a part of his own Army nostalgic history, Fliegerhorst was the place where President John F. Kennedy shared lunch with about 200 soldiers the day after his famous *Ich bin ein Berliner* speech on June 25th in the summer of 1963. **Footloose Forester** was honored to be selected to represent his unit at the luncheon that was hosted at Headquarters Mess, 212th Artillery Group.

Google Earth is still the place to look for before-after satellite photos but even Google has to make room in their archives for satellite scenes of modern realities. Thus the Google Earth screen capture shown below barely resembles what it looked like in the 1960s, but at least documents the accurate latitude and longitude of the place where **Footloose Forester** shared a memorable lunch with JFK.



(Stickpin on the left is where JFK had lunch)

In the 1960s there were plenty of trees shading Fliegerhorst Kaserne and the surrounding area of farmland was much more extensive. Langendiebach was a picturesque small town, and in his mind it always will be. But this chronicle had to be updated beyond its first draft and a distant memory, simply because life goes on and with it the passage of time brings changes. The town of Langendiebach was even renamed to Erlensee.

The fairly extensive military history of Fliegerhorst can be stitched together by diligent reading into military archives and the personal accounts of soldiers who served there. Thanks to the various social sites embedded in the Internet and video files such as one finds on YouTube, the **Footloose Forester** now has something to add to the ongoing saga of Fliegerhorst. Searched out, referenced, and appended as desired, are more recent accounts of some things Fliegerhorst. The live videos of sweeping vistas obtained by drones and live-action videos of a major fire that took place there in 2015 complement the story line in such a way that a plain chronicle devoid of pictures, sound effects, and action videos seems quaint by comparison.

The first item in making my personal chronicle seem relevant was to verify the date when JFK came to lunch at Headquarters Mess, 212th Arty Group. It was on 25 June 1963. Thanks to computer archives, there is even a black and white film of his arrival. And thanks to the people who posted a video taken from a drone, my updated chronicle could show clear overhead and stationary shots of the remains of the Officers' Club that burned down on 30 July 2015. The sound of firetrucks, the swirling dark smoke and the sharp crackle of flames are all captured on yet another video taken by a local resident. *Großbrand auf dem ehemaligen Fliegerhorst in Erlensee am 30. Juli 2015* is the title of that dramatic video, and it is available on YouTube.

Ah, the Officers' Club and the attached PX that everybody remembers! There are more stories and some specific people associated with those burned out places. But those chronicles are for another time. In the meantime, **Footloose Forester** will be checking back with Google Earth to monitor when the charred remains of the Officers' Club are removed.



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Rides On The Wild Side

As he emerged from a dream and lay beneath the cozy flannel sheet, the **Footloose Forester** started to brew his next chronicle about flying and flying machines. After many years of wondering why his most creative moments came in the early morning hours, he finally concluded that it was because the thoughts that had been escaping from various parts of his brain during dreamy nights had coalesced and were waiting to emerge as he awoke. When he arose from the bed into the quiet darkness of his bedroom, his mind and body were not distracted by other things. It was time to write.

The latest dream barely touched on the bizarre itinerary he pursued when he was a young soldier. With plenty of days of annual leave in Europe in the early 1960s, the **Footloose Forester** wasn't thinking about how wild things might get as he set off alone on another adventure. It would be decades before he reflected back; and some of the details about how wild and bizarre some of the trips were, came in occasional dreams. As fuzzy as some dreams tend to be, sometimes they also dwell on real and nagging details about how wild some past adventures really were. If he was ever going to straighten out his stories to the point of getting them right, he thought that at some point he needed to reconstruct enough of the details to satisfy himself that, in those days, he really did go off half-cocked. Boldly, but half-cocked.

With a Military Air Transport Service (MATs) flight schedule in his back pocket, getting around Europe was cheap for a soldier like the **Footloose Forester**. It was not always convenient as regards schedule and destination, but it was cheap transportation. When people asked where he was going, he sometimes joked that it depended on where the airplanes were flying. On this dream-inspired trip, however; he had a plan, with a Plan B and Plan C as a back-up just in case Plan A didn't work out.

Back in 1963, Plan A was to fly round-trip from Rhein-Main airbase near Frankfurt, Germany to Lakenheath airbase in England to visit his brother, Airman Joe Pellek. We Americans often referred to the various airbases scattered around Europe as US bases partly because American military personnel had leased many former bases after World War II, and had virtually exclusive use of some sectors of civilian airports. Although Rhein-Main International Airport was a well-established international air terminal administered by the Germans, the American section was devoted to American military aircraft, even with its restricted access roads. It was there that the **Footloose Forester** went to wait out his departure on a four-engine C-124 Globe Master to Lakenheath, England.

Getting off the ground that day was not a sure thing. The fog was so thick that visibility was near zero. In fact, the scheduled flight had been scrubbed the previous day because of the fog; and this day was no better in regard to visibility. The pilots were facing mounting pressure to deliver their cargo, so just as we boarded they did mention that we might have to turn back if we didn't get landing clearance on the other side in England. We took off in thick fog and landed in thick fog, with the aid of radar departure and landing procedures. The **Footloose Forester** was the only passenger in the cargo hold; it was, after all, a C-124 cargo plane.

It was only by guessing about the tight turns, throttling back of engines and the manipulation of flaps as we approached our destination that the **Footloose Forester** surmised that we must be close to the ground and making our final approach. He saw the ground for the first time from a height of less than 100 feet, by his estimation. That was probably below minimum acceptable visibility standards, but he had been warned. Besides, that is what he expected of hotshot Air Force pilots.

Lakenheath Air Base was home to two squadrons of F-101 and F-102 fighter jets, as far as he could tell. The **Footloose Forester** looked for other types of aircraft, but except for the occasional C-54 cargo plane and the more modern C-124s like the one he was on, it seemed to be a small tactical base of operations.

Plan A included returning to Rhein-Main on the same C-124 on which he arrived, but only a week later. But when it was time to go back to Germany, the **Footloose Forester** could not get clearance to board because the mission was carrying classified material. As the **Footloose Forester** watched the C-124 clear the end of the runway and the landing gear being hoisted up, he set Plan B into motion. He and his brother Joe turned around and set off by taxi for the local train station. It wasn't too worrisome waiting there for the train to arrive; if he didn't make the next connection on time, Plan C could go forward.

The train arrived on schedule at Charing Station, London and he immediately hailed a London cab for a wild ride to Heathrow Airport. Although the cabbie had doubts about his making the outgoing flight to Rhein-Main or wherever **Footloose Forester** was going, the **Footloose Forester** wasn't too worried about that, either. He knew that he could take another flight to another place on the continent, and he also knew that he could pay cash. In those days, airline companies would accept cash over the counter and having reservations wasn't always required.

In retrospect, he doesn't remember what the booking agents said on the phone regarding his desired scheduling of Heathrow to Rhein-Main. When he got to the ticket counter at BOAC (British Airlines) they were waiting for him, because they were in the process of closing the counter for the night and he was the last passenger. The two very friendly and helpful young gals also told him that they couldn't book him on a direct flight to Rhein-Main, short a flight as it was; but could book him on a British Airways flight into Brussels, Belgium and then on a connecting flight to Rhein-Main. That is what happened.

The **Footloose Forester** was starting to see a miracle unfold as he was led by the hand by one of the booking agents to the tunnel that would take him to the gate leading him to his waiting Boeing 727. In the meantime, the other booking agent was calling ahead to the pilot and asked him to hold the plane. When the **Footloose Forester** stepped through the side passenger door of the Boeing 727, the attendant inside wordlessly buttoned it up.

Nobody said a word. He was expecting to see a disapproving scowl or two from the aircraft crew that had waited for him to appear; or from one of the other passengers. Nothing! And he was gratified that everyone had so graciously accommodated him. Furthermore, it would not be the last commercial airliner into which he would be the last tardy passenger grateful to make an ongoing connection.

The final thought about the short trip across the English Channel came minutes after the Boeing 727 leveled off on our short hop into Brussels. The other BOAC attendants hurriedly began to serve a full course dinner, including the pouring of wine. Imagine, serving all the passengers from front to back with a complete hot meal and complementary wine, and then gathering up the dirty trays; all in stride -- during the 25-30-minute flight between London and Brussels. Even the young and inexperienced **Footloose Forester** thought that BOAC was taking things a bit too far in trying to please, but the experience did get stamped into his brain as one he was not likely to forget.

In case you are wondering, the **Footloose Forester** arrived back at Fliegerhorst Kaserne, Langendiebach, Germany a couple of hours late. A few of the other soldiers in his unit relished the thought that he might be AWOL, but the company clerk pragmatically noted in the log book that he had overextended his stay by one day. Thanks, PFC Hutchinson, for the official reminder about those wild rides.

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France Was Always A Bit Special

If you watch closely, you can see the French countryside taking shape in stark contrast to the Swiss countryside along its common border, as you clear the customs station at Pontarlier. The neat fields, the tidy houses, and the precisely stacked piles of firewood alongside Swiss barns are replaced almost immediately by shaggy fields with ragged boundaries, fewer well kempt houses and barns; and haphazardly stacked firewood that all send out clear signals that this is not Switzerland, so it must be France. The land itself can speak of national characteristics, just as people themselves are stereotyped. Perhaps it is not fair to generalize, but within limits it can be said that there truly are national or cultural characteristics. Off in the distance you can see where the border is, marked not by a fence or barrier, but a landscape of contrasting fields and farms. So it was that **Footloose Forester** decided that he was probably more French than Swiss in outlook and mode of dressing.

The live-and-let-live attitude of the French carries through in most aspects of daily life and the **Footloose Forester** counted on that as he drank his wine at Paris bistros and outdoor cafes. Sit as long as you want and watch Paris life go by, that seems to be the French way. That is not to say that life is slow and serene everywhere in France. The Train de Grand Vitesse from Nice to Paris travels at speeds over 125 miles per hour, and taking that train was one of the objectives that made the last trip to France so memorable. On the most recent trip there, the normal operating speed had been upgraded. In some places that Train de Grand Vitesse hit speeds up to 320 km/h.

There were a few earlier and a few later sojourns to France. Some were marked by laughter at the time but later became saddened memories after the passing of brother Joe. As an airman stationed in England, Joe joined up with Footloose Forester, then a G.I. from Germany. They reveled as pretend *bon vivants* on the left bank, drinking cheap wine and hoofing it or riding the metro around the city to see the wonders of the most beautiful city in the world. On our agenda were Montmartre, the Moulin Rouge, to attend Sunday mass at Notre Dame, to ride the elevator to the top of the Eiffel Tower; and to eat fresh baguettes from corner street vendors. Not bad for a week-end squeezed in between a road trip through the Black Forest, the Swiss Alps and sunny Rome, via Genoa and a quick ascent of the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

At another time, the **Footloose Forester** made a brief stopover to visit Thu's cousin who lives southeast of Paris. She mentioned, ever so casually, that her neighbors across the street were always shouting at each other. The woman was an African that her husband married during his travels. He was the man who led the takeover

of the Comoros Islands, at the behest of the French Government. You can read about him in the forward of the novel, "The Dogs of War." It may be a novel but he was real and he really did take over the Republic of the Comoros in that historical novel, and in fact at the behest of the French Government. The **Footloose Forester** was later briefed about his exploits by a resident Canadian whom he met years later in the Comoros. The Canadian pointed out some of the places that the famous mercenary, who called himself Col. Bob Denard, had landed, disarmed the opposition and established his headquarters. A fuller historical account of his actions can be found in the Chronicles of a Footloose Forester: C for Comoros.

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A Street Scene In Montmartre

If it is generally true, as it seems to be, that the older we get, the more we reminisce about the past; then those of us that want to share some of that past with our families should take advantage of the tools that make story telling easier. With word processors that check our spelling and allow us to back up to insert the better word; that allow us to slip in old photos of the “growing up” days; even to put audio and video within the story.... well what more could you ask for? It’s time to get busy; that is, if you care enough to share with others as you would have them share with you.

You don’t have to be an accomplished writer, or photographer, or an expert with video recorders or cell phones that have those capabilities. Ask a family member to help you and chances are the young, technology savvy ones will be happy to make it into a project—a legacy project. They will also learn along the way; and chances are that someday they, themselves, will have legacy portfolios that include text, travel photos, oral histories and panoramic videos that show the sweep of landscapes and the antics of pets in action.

As quoted in *Faust, Prologue for the Theatre* by John Anster: “Are you in earnest? Seize this very minute! Boldness has genius, and magic in it. Only engage, and then the mind grows heated. Begin, and then the work will be completed.”



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The Acropolis Was On The Bucket List

Greece was on his bucket list of places to see well before the popular concept of “things to do and things to see before one kicks the bucket” was made into a movie. As a teenager, he sometimes taunted his mother with the expression “it’s time for me to agitate the gravel.” That usually signified that he was ready to return to college, starting out on foot but most often by hitchhiking to his destination. In those days quite a few people hitched back and forth, and he sometimes forgets that he also hitched from Netcong, New Jersey to California in 10 days. By way of reflection, and only years later, did he decide to call himself the **Footloose Forester**. But having a personal bucket list was always in the back of his mind. Visiting Greece was always on that list.

Athens is a remarkably clean city, at least which is the way he remembers it. He walked for miles each day, so saw enough to have that observation stick in his memory. He did not always know where he was going; and most of the time it did not matter. Part of the mystery of discovery was the serendipity factor. Serendipity, an unexpected but pleasant discovery, was part of the adventure-seeking process and part of the fun, enjoyed retrospectively. Coming upon something that you were not looking for is a bigger surprise than going directly to a venue where you already know what to expect.

To be sure, he visited some of the famous sites. The Acropolis was one of them; it is still magnificent and imposing, perched as it is on a tall limestone hill overlooking Athens. The columns and partial roof are still remarkably strong, even after more than a thousand years. But the Parthenon in another part of the city is almost completely intact, even though its state of preservation does not elicit as much commentary regarding its magnificence. The **Footloose Forester** spent several hours there and among various ruins, reluctant to leave before absorbing as much history as he could.

One impression that he remembers was the low number of visitors to various ruins, except for the Acropolis. At one point, he was walking along an ancient roadway that was paved with thousands of small marble rectangular tiles, with dimensions of approximately one inch by 2.5 inches. He was sorely tempted to lift one or two of them out and take them home as souvenirs. More than a few of them were loose and would easily fit into a pocket. And there was nobody around! His conscience kept him from pocketing a part of ancient history, but he will always remember the temptation.

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A Very Strange Bird Is The Pelican

Having a short name with only 6 letters didn't limit the number of ways his family name was mispronounced or misspelled. In junk mail, in particular, it showed up as Pell, or Pelle, or Pellik, Pollock, Pallek, Pelleck, or Pellick. When he was a candidate for the military draft after graduating college, the recruiters managed to mess up his last name in such a way that the story about what happened sounds like it was made-up.

At that time, the **Footloose Forester** was renting a post office mail box in a small town in California that was chosen because it was at the crossroads where he passed on his way to different consulting jobs. He didn't have a permanent residence, so a rented post office box in Grass Valley, California became his official mailing address. And he only checked his mail there about every 2-3 weeks. The mail piled up while he was "On the road...again!"

It so happened that all of the recruiting literature from the military services had arrived while he was on a long consulting trip. When he finally emptied out the overstuffed box, he realized that everybody military was interested in talking with him. Yet, when it came to getting his last name right, the Navy spelled it one way; the Army recruiter spelled it a different way; and the Air Force recruiter spelled it a third way—but all of them spelled it wrong! Only the official letter from the US Army—the one with his draft notice enclosed—got it right.

Surnames aside, the nicknames he remembers are the links with the past that have personal connotations that were bestowed by family, friends, classmates and Army buddies. A few were irritating at the time, but he learned how to overcome the irritation and to laugh at himself. Thus, to this very day, he recalls that, "A very strange bird is the pelican; its bill can hold more than its belly can." That label of Pelican goes back to grammar school.

At home it was always Dick, except when his mother was miffed about something. Then it was Richard, including a cold stare. At school, a few friends clung to Rich. In the Army, the first alternative moniker was proclaimed by a voluble GI buddy who decided that "Pegleg" was going to be the new call sign. Pegleg stuck until it was time to move to another post. The last of the nicknames was also created by Army buddies who shared our workspace in the basement of a former Luftwaffe base in Germany. Since the **Footloose Forester** was a happy guy who was not embarrassed to sing aloud whenever and wherever he wanted, the guys labeled him Perry (for Perry Como) Pellek. Even the Company Commander called him Perry.

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On Fear

An innocent Internet meme about fear was the first disturbance that summoned the specter of fear to return, to creep closer. The second incident was a horrific movie about World War II, the very same day and within the same casual living space of our peaceful home. Curiously, the passive meme on the computer monitor in the early morning was enough to awaken the fear that resides within the tremulous innards of the **Footloose Forester**; but the nightmarish scenes of close combat on the island of Okinawa in the movie Hacksaw Ridge was enough to stimulate a nightmare about fear itself. The **Footloose Forester** has always feared of being afraid. There were too many instances of fearful circumstances in his life, that the prospect of being afraid was always going to be a “condition precedent” that might affect how others looked on him and how he perceived himself the next time that fear is in the air.

The masthead of many of his writings: Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams was chosen in deliberate recognition that some of his chronicles are driven by dreams, somber dreams, dreadful dreams, nightmarish dreams that had fear as a common element. Hence, an early morning awakening and an attempt to put some of those fears to rest. Writing about certain themes has always been cathartic for the **Footloose Forester**, a loner who nevertheless is ever wanting to confess some of his fears with others so that they understand.

As a young boy, the **Footloose Forester** saw the fear in the eyes of people around him, even when he did not share their particular fear. His older brother once pleaded with his eyes when he thought that he was about to be abandoned alone at a remote fishing hole; even his words and the scenario are indelible to this day, “Don’t leave me.” Several years later, in a remote canyon in heavy forest astride the American River in California, a young man who was accompanying the **Footloose Forester** showed fear in his eyes almost immediately after he sensed that he had been abandoned in the woods. In neither instance did the **Footloose Forester** say anything about the telltale signs of fear, but he grew up knowing that fear is a silent intruder that visits on a moment’s notice. Yes, he could see fear in others but he also knew that others could see fear in him.

In an Aldous Huxley novel, the protagonist opined that it is important for us to know exactly who we are. Those few words stuck and the **Footloose Forester** has ever since been asking himself if he truly knows who he is—inside. As it turns out he was henceforth faced with a few life and death circumstance that gave him the opportunity to find out what he was made of. Fear was part of the setting. So compelling were the

circumstances that some of the details are etched into his brain, hard-wired there as reminders that fear and the prospect of being afraid will never depart.

One remembered opportunity to act through fear occurred during the second Viet Cong offensive of the Viet Nam War in 1968. As VC patrols advanced past his modest apartment building on the outskirts of Saigon in the early morning hours, he could hear them running in the streets below. He was alone in an empty room on the third floor, with only a butcher knife to protect himself. To this day, he remembers offering up a prayer of thanksgiving for the blessings he had known, and not asking anything more from life. He still believes that is how he thinks of the world around him. Secondly, he thanked God for allowing him to find out who he was. Courage to face the next few minutes drove out the fear.

A second life and death episode took place on a beautiful sunlit day on a mountain in the Bavarian Alps of southern Germany, a few years earlier. As a gentle rain began to fall, the **Footloose Forester** knew that he was unable to retreat back down from the few square inches of foothold where he was blocked in his upward ascent by a 400-pound boulder that blocked his way. The boulder was perched at the lip of a rocky basin, with a sheer drop on both sides. There was no way around it. It was a case of scaling the boulder and getting above it in the talus slope, or tumbling down a thousand feet or so if the boulder dislodged. The prayer that the **Footloose Forester** conjured was another paean to the beauties of this earth and a prayer of thanksgiving to God for giving him the opportunity to find out if he had courage. As Aldous Huxley had said, it was important to know who we are.



Another memory about his fears took place during a forest fire in California. The **Footloose Forester** was working the night shift at one leading edge of an advancing fire with only a rookie firefighter named Reno Francetti with him. As the senior person, at least in terms of experience, the **Footloose Forester** instructed Reno that if the advancing fire started to crown out above our heads, we should retreat to a narrow ravine down the slope. The fire started to crown and we made a hasty retreat down the slope. He did not want to be seen as a coward fleeing the flames, but he did fear for our lives if the fire overtook our tenuous position in deep forest foliage. That scene has forever haunted him.

The fear of fear revisiting him has always been inside his psyche. Little wonder why that the **Footloose Forester** prays for courage when he enters the forest alone. Each and every time that he debarked from his one-man boat to venture into the rhino and crocodile havens of Ujung Kulon National Park in Indonesia, he always put special emphasis on the ending of the Lord's Prayer ...and deliver us from evil. It was the fear of fear that impelled him to pray for courage. He was a loner and had only courage to keep him company. But as Franklin Delano Roosevelt famously said, "we have nothing to fear but fear itself."

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

An Indelicate Subject

Sometimes it takes the stimulus of an ignorant post or meme on the Internet[®] to finally push the **Footloose Forester** over the edge. As repugnant and as repulsive as the subject matter is, he thinks that it is high time to discuss the issue of toilet paper—in a totally serious way.

To begin with, the social network link that featured a cartoon Minion posing a silly question about the seemingly obvious need to buy toilet paper misses the point that not all cultures in the world buy toilet paper. Furthermore, not all people in the world depend upon toilet paper to accomplish their daily, personal hygiene. In fact, some outspoken critics of the personal hygiene practices common in Western countries could make a strong case to the contrary. The unnamed Minion shown below may be cute and have his admirers, but he is careless by not using a question mark where it is called for and he is also way off base in thinking that everybody buys toilet paper. Millions don't buy it and millions don't use it.

This topic is a serious one when you find yourself in the midst of a cultural milieu where the everyday conveniences of home are simply not available. If your country hosts are not going to cater to your every need, you simply have to make do. As a Westerner traveling through The Third World, it behooves you to be prepared to meet many inconveniences. None is more personal and perhaps more distressing than discovering that your modest hotel, guest house, campsite, or private home has no toilet paper. A few not too serious remedies can be found on the Internet; indeed, there is a handful posted in response to the ignorant Minion that prompted this unsavory chronicle.

On the brighter side, there are opportunities for Westerners to purchase their vital travel needs before reaching their culturally remote destinations. Be aware, however, that not all brands of toilet paper are manufactured the same; and not all are equally effective in meeting the expectations of the user. For example, at one time in the past, there was a brand of British toilet paper that possessed a distinctively waxy surface. If you were not forewarned about it, you ran the risk of having a stiff, crinkly experience that could make you wince. It so happened that the **Footloose Forester** had to use the “facilities” during an overnight stopover in England, as did a couple of the other Peace Corps Volunteers on our way to Pakistan. He advised them not to use the British toilet paper, for reasons a priori about its waxy characteristics. He himself waited until they landed in Frankfurt, Germany and used the much better German TP. He already knew about both kinds, thanks to

his experiences in the US Army in Europe. But his Peace Corps friends learned the painful way at Heathrow International Airport in England.

In the United States, as well, not all toilet paper comes with satisfaction guaranteed. Cheap toilet paper tears easily and literally disintegrates when it is wet. It matters greatly when one is suffering from diarrhea. When advertisers mention that their product has “wet strength” the message should be heeded. Wet one or more sections of tissue to see if the paper stays intact; and to see if your brand holds up. Unfortunately, even the major manufacturers have not yet broached the indelicate subject of ways to be sure that you are really clean. These days, however; they have products on the market to do the job properly.

Use a wet strength tissue to prove it to yourself and those around you that you have moved beyond the insufficiency of wiping your cares away. People in other cultures know that cleansing with water is better than using paper. It is high time that Westerners acknowledge that truth.

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
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Pani Pulau

Snippets of memory, the stuff of legacy stories... That was the theme of a recent chronicle by the **Footloose Forester**. Today another snippet of a distant memory was jarred loose during a period of physical activity. Truth be told, many chronicles originated during periods of physical activity in years past and the **Footloose Forester** did not often waste the opportunity to jot down notes and await further developments into crafting a credible story to share. Today, that snippet was revived from his Peace Corps days in Pakistan.

On a short show and tell trip (otherwise known as a dog and pony show) to the fringes of the Cholistan Desert, the **Footloose Forester** was ushered into a very modest field station administered by the Ministry of Forests and Waters. It was far enough outside of any town that it was anybody's guess what the mailing address might be. There was no electricity and no running water at the desert outpost. Dignitaries and important officials probably arrived by Land Rover by following faint tire tracks in the sand, and supplies probably arrived by camel caravan.

The temperature outside was probably in the mid-90s when we arrived, but inside it was even hotter, due to the absence of wind. To make life inside tolerable, however; the Conservator of Forests hired a man known as a punka wali whose job it was to pull a rope that circulated air from a large folded carpet above the desk of the Officer in Charge. The carpet was a substitute for a fan and the punka wali was the employee charged with turning on the circulating air.

Even at his post in Bahawalpur, on the border of the Punjab and the Sind Desert, it was more comfortable to sleep outside at night during the warmest months, from April through October. The Footloose Forester did not have a problem moving his charpai like the one shown below into the courtyard for the duration.



Another low-level employee at the field station was the pani wali whose job it was to fetch drinking water for the Officer in Charge. There were very few people assigned to the desert outpost, but it was clear that the duties of the punka wali and the pani wali were separate and different. The station itself and job status that went to being assigned there were not things to brag about. The Officer in Charge may have had territorial responsibilities but one could not tell by looking around. What was obvious was when he gestured to the punka wali to pull the rope, a sudden waft of hot desert air circulated inside the small field station. And when the Officer in Charge was thirsty, he called to the pani wali who no doubt was outside seeking the coolest spot he could find.

The day that the **Footloose Forester** visited, he remembers sitting for perhaps 20 minutes in a chair next to the desk of the Officer in Charge. The Conservator of Forests and his tour guide had gone elsewhere to attend to some issue or other. Three times the Officer in Charge called out, “Oh Mia” to get the attention of the pani wali. When the pani wali finally appeared, the message from the Officer in Charge to the pani wali was terse: “pani pulau (bring water).” The **Footloose Forester** remembers the incident clearly because there, on the desk of the Officer in Charge, and just out of an extended arm’s reach, was a full glass of water. The Officer in Charge went thirsty for 20 minutes instead of getting out of his chair and reaching over for the glass of water. Make what you will of this story, but **Footloose Forester** believes that the Officer in Charge of that desert outpost, one constructed of sun-dried bricks, wanted to demonstrate that despite its modest appearance and remote location, he commanded a workforce of subservient underlings.



Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

This Wasn't Your Grandma's Thanksgiving Turkey

When Thanksgiving rolls around and families gather to enjoy traditional meals and each other's company, conversations often tilt to fond recollections about turkeys, stuffing, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie. A perfect setting for legacy writing exercises...but that is not the original intention of coming together. We tend to focus on certain aspects of the Thanksgiving holidays with the upcoming one foremost in our thoughts; yet with the memories of past holidays hanging in the air, ready to be savored like the aroma of the turkey browning in the oven.

Not all families and not all family members get to enjoy Thanksgiving in the same manner. Nor is turkey the only main course served at Thanksgiving dinner. Those in the hospital; service men and women away on deployment; the homeless; and the isolated...all may experience their Thanksgiving Day in non-traditional ways, if at all. Yet, the spirit of thankfulness for the abundance in our lives and for which the original Thanksgiving Day was celebrated is a powerful impetus that leads us to travel far by air, ship and automobile, leading people home.

Most of the past Thanksgiving Day meals of the **Footloose Forester** did consist of turkey as the centerpiece of attraction and of fleeting memories. Happily, turkey was on the menu when he was in the US Army in California and in Germany; when he was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Pakistan; when he was assigned as a civilian contractor in Viet Nam; and in a couple of other places where he might have been at Thanksgiving time. The various hosts were obviously not his family, but Army mess halls served turkey; and the American Ambassador in countries overseas was our host when Peace Corps volunteers were invited in at Thanksgiving time.

One year in Cape Verde the Ambassador asked my wife Thu to roast a turkey for a Thanksgiving gathering of expatriate Americans. There were actually three turkeys in his kitchen; one roasted by his maid, one provided by his secretary, and Thu's. He saved the best one (Thu's) for himself and served the other ones to the guests. He said he was going to, and he did. In Kenya, three American families decided to take Thanksgiving on the road, to the coastal area south of Mombasa where we feasted on turkey and fresh red snapper. It was a delicious memory.

At other times, generous souls who appreciated the traditional importance of Thanksgiving in American society invited the **Footloose Forester** into their homes. They even served up the traditional candied sweet potatoes, stuffing, and cranberry sauce; following by the iconic and traditional pumpkin pie.

In recent years when we are not On the road....again! as often as in the past, my wife and I seek out likely candidates from outside of our family to come and share a day of Thanksgiving in our home. We recall having a Pakistani graduate student one year in Hawaii, and a French family the following year. The French family returned the favor the following year by inviting us to their apartment for Easter dinner. There have been a dozen or more Vietnamese students and friends that have also been on our guest list over the years, partly because Thanksgiving is a special American holiday but also because Thanksgiving is not a traditional Vietnamese holiday. Everyone, without exception, liked the cranberry sauce and the pumpkin pie.

One of the most novel Thanksgiving dinners ever, however; was in 1965 when the **Footloose Forester** was on leave from his Peace Corps assignment in Pakistan. He was traveling west through Turkey en route to meet other Peace Corps volunteers in Istanbul. He was a day late to the rendezvous that had been planned, but they kindly saved him a plate so that he could say that he enjoyed Thanksgiving turkey in Turkey during the Thanksgiving holidays.



Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
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A Day in the Cholistan Desert

We met in a sparsely furnished office building whose windows rattled when the wind blew. Two young and eager Pakistani soil scientists had been assigned to escort us to one of their work sites on the western edge of the Cholistan Desert. How we got there is a mystery, like picking up a book and discovering that there are several pages missing from the story you were reading. The next page begins where we were entering a village that had no paved roads and only one main street lined with simple wooden, unpainted kiosks. We passed through on foot, on our way to the site on the other side of a short but steep hill off to the right.

A fierce windstorm arose as we climbed the hill. As we got close to the top of the ridgeline, the wind threw grains of salt into our faces. Normally there were sandstorms coming off the Cholistan at this time of year, but this storm brought crude grains of salt. Without complaint or comment, all four of us managed to reach the lee side of the hill where we presumably could rest and escape the worst part of the wind-driven salt storm. Curiously, there was a long, sturdy bench beckoning us to come and rest in the shade of a concave pocket below the summit of the hill. The wide bench was perfectly level and constructed of polished dark granite. There we sat and rested. And rested and sat. In fact, we sat there without speaking to one another for two hours. Finally, Dr. Norm French, a Range Management specialist from the Utah State University spoke up. Patiently and deliberately, he asked if this was the project area we were supposed to be visiting. Yes, replied one of the Pakistanis; and by the way, he asked that we submit a report of our visit to convince their supervisor that they were out on the job.

We were taken aback at his request, but before we could make comment the young Pakistani began to explain the job and the circumstances to us. Young and intelligent soil scientists like himself were assigned to take charge of certain territories and to protect, develop, and manage the resources there. But they had no staff, no equipment, no financing, and no plans that they could launch on their own. So, sitting on a stone bench for two hours was part of the site visit; and asking someone else to write an official report explaining the circumstances was another part of the strategy. The young Pakistani was not bitter, but he was hoping that others would see the situation through his eyes.

The experience was a dream but the Cholistan Desert is real and Dr. Norm French really went there to help design and enact plans to protect and conserve natural resources there. One of the more remarkable experiments was to build a series of exclosures to keep herds of sheep and camels from eradicating all of the grass and shrubs

in the region. Despite being a desert, there are species of grasses and shrubs that could be self-sustaining as plant communities if only they are not overgrazed. His exclosures proved it. They were meant to keep something out. One or two exclosures that the **Footloose Forester** visited had within them several sturdy clumps of grass that were over six feet tall. It was only the four-strand perimeter of barbed wire and an armed guard that kept the animals out. A solitary armed soldier in the middle of the Cholistan Desert, standing guard over a few clumps of grass? Truth is stranger than fiction. And one reason why these *Chronicles of a Footloose Forester* often have the masthead banner **Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams.**

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

Euripides Taught Us Important Lessons

Several of the **Chronicles of the Footloose Forester** were written with an unstated purpose of informing and instructing the reader to not take everything at face value. In one of them, however; the message was bluntly stated near the end of the chronicle entitled, "My Bid is Eight Spades." As posted, the passage read, "Don't believe everything you read; don't believe everything you hear; and don't believe everything you dream. But, above all; don't dismiss, out of hand, everything that does not square with everything that may go against everything that you personally believe."

The 31 March 2013 story was about a dream, thus some of the scenes from the dream can be dismissed as unreality. Nobody can be criticized for dismissing dreams. Yet, some of the truisms in dreams were part of the substance of that particular dream that have endured as memorable quotations for over two thousand years. One of the favorites of the **Footloose Forester** is one by Euripides (480-406 B.C.), as follows:

Question everything. Learn something. Answer nothing. (Euripides circa 410 B.C.)

Currently the **Footloose Forester** is reading a book written by fellow-forester Jay H. Cravens who was a US. Forest Service employee working under an Agency for International Development contract during the Viet Nam War. Cravens was a civilian, but saw much more fighting than many Americans in uniform, regardless of their branch of service. That was a matter of where he was assigned; where he travelled; and where and when he witnessed the horrors of war. His account of the circumstances and the fighting that took place in and around Saigon during the Têt Offensive of 1968 are first-hand impressions that he composed as letters to his family and later transcribed as the basis of his 1994 book, A Well Worn Path. (University Editions, Inc., 503 pages).

Jay Cravens and the **Footloose Forester** crossed paths only once or twice, at the office of the former, in Viet Nam. But because Cravens, in his book, mentioned several other people whom the **Footloose Forester** also knew; and because his account of the Têt Offensive was extensively covered in more than 40 pages in his book, the **Footloose Forester** values the book as the best description of what happened in Saigon during the Têt Offensive in early 1968, as told by a civilian who lived through it. Cravens was at one end of town, and the **Footloose Forester** was waiting it out at Tan Son Nhut Airport, just outside of town.

Although most of what Jay Cravens saw and reported in meticulous detail was based on first person experiences, he did introduce a few ideas that were based on his opinions about the food, the people, the customs and Vietnamese traditions that do not fall into the category of verifiable fact. When his ideas are identified as opinions, his personal remarks should be accepted as opinions-- the opinions of Jay Cravens. However, when a glaring misstatement of fact appears deep into the discussion of the aftermath of the Têt Offensive, the purported facts should be questioned. That is where the lessons of Euripides kick in.

Question everything. Learn something. Answer nothing.

There is no hint in the Cravens book that he was a golfer; but in more than one passage there is ample evidence that he showed disdain for several individuals who were golfers; and who apparently had shared stories with him about certain aspects of the Têt Offensive. Thus, his deprecating remark, "A real tragedy has affected a number of Embassy and USAID workers...! Bombs (undoubtedly dropped by a non-golfer flyer) have created traps in the center of the 12th, 14th and 17th greens...page 391.

There were no bombs dropped on the 12th, 14th or 17th greens. Too bad that Cravens chose to include something that somebody told him, then included as part of his remarkably detailed first-hand account. As far as Euripides is concerned, his advice to question everything was the stimulus for the **Footloose Forester** to flag that particular passage on p.391 of the book, *A Well Worn Path*; and to commence writing this chronicle. Some 45 years after the Têt Offensive, the **Footloose Forester** learned something—the false rumor about the bombing of three greens at the Golf Club de Saigon. As a member of that club that was just across the street from where he worked, the **Footloose Forester** played on those unaffected greens a couple of weeks after the Têt Offensive was over. There were no bomb craters.

Later in the Cravens book, he briefly described the fighting in and around Saigon during the VC "summer offensive" of 1968. The passages are convincing, given that they were written by someone who kept a journal and kept the chronology of events, day by day. The **Footloose Forester** had no reason to question most of what was written, except for the passages that began on page 448. Cravens wrote, "Now for today's (5 May) events..." followed by entries on 7 May and 9 May 1968.

At the time, Cravens was within a few days of leaving Viet Nam upon completion of his contract; therefore it was curious that he wrote, "I have my airline tickets and everything completed.....The last obstacle could be the route to Tan Son Nhut airport. It was under fire all day yesterday and closed to all except military traffic." The subsequent entry for 9 May was the most disturbing, as follows: "Fighting in the past two days has been more severe than during Tet. More bombs and napalm have been dropped on Saigon than during the first few days of Tet. Fighting goes on day and night..." ...page 449. One wonders where Cravens got that information. The **Footloose Forester** was on duty at Tan Son Nhut during that period; and he cannot relate to most of what Cravens said about dropping bombs and napalm. He also rode his Honda 50cc to work each morning; and returned each evening without ever being notified that the roads were closed. He never got a sense that there was more danger than at other times during that offensive. And he never saw evidence of napalm being dropped in Saigon, nor did any of those he worked with discuss the use of napalm. Indeed, he categorically disputes that napalm was dropped in Saigon by American warplanes. Only the Viet Nam Air Force flew missions over their city; and that fact was well known.

The belated addition of the foregoing paragraph was not anticipated until the **Footloose Forester** read pages 448-450 of the Cravens book. Surely Cravens got some of his information from unreliable sources. Indeed the VC summer offensive was a massive effort; however it is difficult for the **Footloose Forester** to accept much of what was written about road closures and the dropping of napalm within the city limits of Saigon when he traversed those streets daily. Thus, the main thesis of the Euripides axiom: question everything.

Of course, the wise Euripides included the words, "Answer nothing" as part of his famed quotation. That might imply that neither Jay Cravens nor the **Footloose Forester** can now verify the facts regarding the former greens at the Golf Club de Saigon, nor the use of air power during the subsequent VC summer offensive. The tiny 40 acre golf course was converted into part-park, part-fruit orchard in the post-Viet Nam War era. Yet, the images of the 12th, 14th and 17th greens are still clearly visible in the mind of the **Footloose Forester**. And that includes the period of time more than a year after the VC offensive.

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

A Cobra Is No Match For A Speeding Taxi

Getting kicked out of the University of Malaysia library was not what he expected, but then again, the **Footloose Forester** tried not to clasp to fixed notions about people, their national governments, policies or cultural attitudes. So he left when challenged because he did not belong there, in their view.

He was in Kuala Lumpur hoping to further his knowledge about how Malaysians went about tropical forestry. He managed to see the operations of a rubber plantation; from the tapping of the rubber trees, to the processing of the odorous cakes of rubber. Years later he spent some time in Singapore learning to identify trees in the Singapore Botanical Garden and it was a very worthwhile time spent. But this time, paving the way to better preparation with documented library references in a country that had extensive tropical forests did not pan out.

As he remembers it now, the occasion was during a business trip (of sorts) on a short leave from Viet Nam and not directly associated with his interests in learning more about tropical forestry. He had previously made contact with a representative of Dow Chemical Company who first contacted him in Saigon, but who had his headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. The representative invited him to dinner one night at the spectacular Selangor Club, a leftover icon of British colonial rule. Although **Footloose Forester** wanted to make a business meeting out of it, he was suffering a summer cold at the time and begged off. The cold included a mild case of laryngitis to go along with the misery. He never saw the Dow representative again.

The clearest memory of Malaysia took place while the **Footloose Forester** was sitting in the front seat of a service taxi that was making a run from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur. As the taxi approached a sweeping bend, he saw a large king cobra slither out from the forest from the left. Instead of scurrying across to safety, the 8-10 foot king cobra rose up, spread his wide hood and challenged the taxi. The taxi hit him just below the eye level. Although the taxi driver slowed down to look in the rear mirror, he did not stop to see if the cobra was dead.

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
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Over Time, Even The Facts Change

Learning the names of state capitals was a fundamental part of geography classes; and in grammar school Geography was his favorite subject. Although some people believe that knowledge is power; others discount the importance of book learning if there are no practical applications of facts and figures that are learned in school. This brief chronicle concerns the application of knowledge about how even the facts change. What may be true at one time does not make it true for all time. In other words, facts may change.

The best example that comes to mind is the alteration of the facts regarding the documented elevation of notable mountains. The **Footloose Forester** believed that the height of Mt. Everest in Nepal was 29,028 feet--because that is what his grammar school geography book said. We now know mountains shrink as well as grow and since the Himalaya Range is growing higher with the passage of time, the documented height of Mt. Everest will be reportedly greater in modern publications than it was in old text books.

Another example is that of Pyramid Peak, in the Crystal Range of the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. For many years, topographic maps showed the peak as 10,002 feet in elevation. When **Footloose Forester** reached the summit of Pyramid Peak as an adventurous young hiker, he believed he had passed a milestone by climbing a mountain over 10,000 feet tall. Modern surveying instruments now tell him that Pyramid Peak is no longer registered as 10,002 feet. The latest reference he saw listed it as 9,987 feet. Quite a difference!

Other changes in geographic data abound. Perhaps the grandest discovery took place when calculations from satellite data confirmed that the famous crossroads in the American West where New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Utah meet--is actually in error by over two miles. Just recently in 2012 it was confirmed that the southern border of North Carolina was just far enough into South Carolina to affect 93 property owners who thought that they lived in South Carolina. The "fact" of their state residence persisted for 240 years, ever since the boundary was surveyed. Municipal and administrative problems have since arisen.

Of course, the names of some nations have changed as the colonial period of history becomes ever dimmer. No more Ceylon, no more Burma, or Cambodia; or Upper Volta. The former Gold Coast transitioned into the name Dahomey; then evolved into Togo. India is still India, but Bombay has been eclipsed by Mumbai; and Calcutta is now Kolkata. And it is now easier to get lost in the former Saigon after it became Ho Chi Minh Ville--because they also changed the names of scores of streets to honor communist revolutionary heroes.

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
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Overnight In Rangoon

In the mid-1960s the military controlled government of Burma was run by a cabal of high-ranking officers who were quite unfriendly to outsiders, especially Westerners. Thus, anybody passing through Burma on their way to Bangkok or Hong Kong was allowed to stay no more than 24 hours; and had transit status as passengers. No visa was required to enter and to leave under transit status, but there was not much flexibility to see the sights, either. That put a cramp in the style of the **Footloose Forester** who always wanted to see as much countryside as time allowed. To make things worse, our plane had arrived from Calcutta after 10:00Pm, and was scheduled to depart for Bangkok at 06:30Am the next morning. Not much time to see the sights in Rangoon after a late dinner at the hotel where we transit passengers were assigned. It was nearly midnight before we finished dinner.

The spectacular golden dome of the Sule Pagoda in Rangoon was on the personal bucket list of a fretting **Footloose Forester** who realized that there was only one way to tick off a visitation to one of the world's greatest temples. He had to walk—after midnight.

As he set off alone from the hotel at a few minutes after midnight, **Footloose Forester** first made sure that he left his wallet, watch, and cash in his hotel room; and made sure he could get back into the hotel on his own. Many hotels closed their main doors after 10Pm or so, thus getting back in on your own was not always a given. This hotel didn't have such a policy, so he set off in the dark, without a map. Luckily, he had sat in a window seat on the plane on arrival and was able to see the glimmer of gold in the bright moonlight of a nearly full moon as we passed overhead the nearby Sule Pagoda on our approach. He sat in a seat on the right side of the plane and, fortunately the temple was underneath, on his side.

At that time he didn't know the name of the 2500 year old pagoda whose dome was covered in gold leaf, but a simple word search done decades later took care of that important detail.

There was little hesitation as he emerged from the hotel and turned left. **Footloose Forester** knew that he had about a dozen blocks to walk into the direction of the temple, but he knew there would be a course correction in his plan as he got close. The streets were deserted. He was counting on that because he didn't know what attitude any potential thief might assume, if he came across one. His luck held up as he got close; he saw the golden dome more clearly as it gleamed in the moonlight. When he approached, he was more cautious regarding

the possible presence of beggars, who often made temples, churches and pagodas their nighttime residence. There were none, thus after taking a few minutes to walk around the pagoda to thrill at its architecture in the moonlight, the **Footloose Forester** contentedly walked back to the hotel to catch a few hours of sleep before departing for Bangkok.

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
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By Dick Pellek

Florida Gators vs. the Florida gators

When he was a Grad Student at the University of Florida, the **Footloose Forester** witnessed the sudden development and equally sudden departure of a bizarre fad that could only have been dreamed up by a bunch of wild college students. That was the epic sporting challenge during the early autumn of 1970 when the Florida Gators vs. the Florida gators set the campus abuzz. The sporting challenge pitted Florida Gators who had two legs against the Florida gators that had four legs. Side-betting spectators on land pitted Gators against Gators who were rooting for either the big, slow gators or the smaller but faster ones that were in the water. One particular fan favorite was a big, ugly upstart with one blind eye. Only a Gator from the Gator Nation would understand.

During the summer of 1970, the State of Florida invested time, money, and effort in ridding Lake Alice of its smothering blanket of water hyacinth. The aquatic plant *Eichornia cassipes* has been dubbed by plant scientists as the worst aquatic weed in the world; and Lake Alice was clogged full of it, to its very banks.

Lake Alice is really a large pond at the edge of the university campus at Gainesville. Although it is located in an attractive setting situated across the road from several apartments for student housing, the residents would only occasionally see aquatic birds patrolling the few lanes of open water near the middle of the pond. That was prior to the dredging operation. For most of the past, Lake Alice had been largely ignored. That was probably because the tall, emergent, and surface-obliterating water hyacinth plants obscured the sight of water, except near the middle; thus rendering its environs as unappealing.

During those years prior to the massive cleaning effort, Lake Alice and its grassy banks adjacent to the roadway was all but ignored, except by those like the **Footloose Forester**, who had his office adjacent to the pond, near the shoreline on the side opposite the student housing complex. Thus, he noticed when things started to change and took to watching the daily process of dredging, cutting and hauling. Boatload after boatload of cut hyacinth began to come out and to open up Lake Alice.

Only when the pond showed a large expanse of open water, did the workers set to mowing the grassy banks adjacent to the roadway that encircled Lake Alice. The banks were getting more appealing each passing day, partly because the mowed grass made walking easier. Some decades earlier, access to the pond had been part

of an architected plan; when two earthen jetties had been built and extended some 30 yards out into the lake. Now it was possible to walk out to the end of the jetties; to see the fish, the birds, and the gators.

Fast forward to early in the autumn of 1970....as the daytime heat began to drop off and after students had completed their classes for the day, more and more of them showed up to enjoy twilight strolls along the banks of the now prettier Lake Alice. That is when someone noticed that more than one alligator was in residence there; and the gators had begun to approach closer and closer to the sloping banks near shore.

Word soon spread after someone tossed a marshmallow into the water and witnessed a tussle among the alligators for the marshmallow snack. It did not take long before small groups of students appeared with bags of marshmallows and placed odds on which of the alligators would appear first in the circular queue for a marshmallow when it was tossed into the water. Within a few days, however; the marshmallow toss took on an unlikely turn. One of the bigger gators gained an advantage by coming all the way to the shore line to be closest to the action. He was easy to identify because he appeared to be blind in one eye; his yellowed left eye socket made him ugly to behold.

At the height of the nightly marshmallow tossing competition, someone discovered that by rolling a marshmallow down the bank, several of the gators would come entirely out of the water in a scene of spirited competition. Henceforth, students would take odds on which gator would be first to get to the small marshmallow as it rolled down the bank. Mr. Ugly Eye was the “crowd favorite” possibly because everyone knew him by sight. He was also the one that usually was waiting offshore when the sun was going down and the students began to show up. How did the **Footloose Forester** know all these things? Because he went daily to his nearby office on the opposite shore; and because he made it a point to learn something about the habits of the gators, as he passed by before going home for dinner.

It was quite a sight to see 3-4 Florida Gators betting on 5-6 Florida gators in a sporting contest that was so dangerous that the university authorities put a stop to it almost as soon as they discovered what was going on. The marshmallow rolling season was short, but it was exciting.



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On The Road...And In The Woods... In Panama and Costa Rica

Teak is Still Exotic in Central America

As a graduate student at the University of Florida, the **Footloose Forester** chose to declare a major in tropical forestry. To be a credible tropical forester, that meant knowing the tropics on a personal basis. The Peace Corps experience in Pakistan during the mid-1960s was perhaps the signal that he was keen on pursuing a career in international forestry, but as a country with a warm temperate climate in most of West Pakistan where he was stationed, that did not qualify as tropical experience. The nearly three years in Viet Nam may have tipped the scales toward added credibility. Soon after he was accepted at Florida, he applied for a study program through the Organization of Tropical Studies. He was accepted for a three month course in Costa Rica, with extensive field work and 12 earned credits at the University of Costa Rica that were recognized by the University of Florida as counting toward a Masters degree.

After more than 35 years of never describing how the **Footloose Forester** came to become a restless traveler, this admission belongs somewhere in his memoirs. But nobody ever asked, so he never elaborated. Perhaps some people were curious but did not know where to begin. In the present instance, it may help to explain how he sojourned in Panama, for starters. As memories grow dim, he needs to piece it together for himself. He usually can't remember how he came and went from countries, and more important, there are always voids in memory about travel in the countryside where public transportation is sparse. Such is the case about Panama.

The **Footloose Forester** was awarded a small grant to study teak plantations in Central America, as a follow-up aspect of his thesis work on teak plantations in Trinidad. He chose Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama as object countries because he knew that teak had been introduced as a plantation species; and he wanted to research how their growth compared to Trinidad teak. The results of the study were published in the journal *Caribbean Forester* in 1970, but since the journal itself went out of publication decades ago, finding the details may forever be lost. Only a few university libraries may retain archives, but the University of Florida is one of them. How does all that have to do with Panama? The dim memory focuses on the fact that the largest and healthiest teak trees were located in the David, Panama area in the extreme northern part of the country.

Other countries in Central America show some interest in pursuing the planting of teak. Perhaps none is more entrepreneurial than Costa Rica. There has been a long learning curve, but past research has begun to pay off.

In the photo below, a rare plantation of teak in neighboring Costa Rica shows that teak indeed is a fast grower, under the right circumstances of growing conditions, including spacing. The tall specimen shown is only one year old.

Few people tout teak in the Western Hemisphere anymore, but if more did they could point to the David plantations as examples of successfully introduced exotic species that may perform better than native teak in its natural range of India, Burma and Thailand. And the several small plantations in Costa Rica also show promise. Superior growth in the young plantation trees in the Guana Coste plantation must be monitored over a number of years, to determine if they also exceed the growth quality classes that have been established as standards of comparison.

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Remembering The Rutgers Tomatoes

Thu's mom, the original Bengal Tiger whose name was Trang Thi Dao, came north with us for the summer in New Jersey, while **Footloose Forester** visited with his parents and worked a factory job prior to starting grad school in Hawaii. It was the first time Dao had ever been in New Jersey and was delighted that the Rutgers tomatoes of early summer were as delicious as she had been told. A sliced tomato as a side dish was pretty common in the Pellek household during the summer months; and tomato sandwiches sprinkled with sugar was a special tradition. She liked them so much that she would separate out the seeds and set them to dry on a sunny window ledge.

Dad was curious to see her save the seed, but said nothing. Then when he saw her take the dried seeds to the back yard and plant them in a shallow circular bed scratched out of the lawn, he started to pay closer attention. He asked **Footloose Forester** what she had in mind. Of course, the answer was that she intended to nurture the seed into tomato plants because they were so good. Dad harrumphed as he often did and mumbled that we Jerseyites didn't grow tomatoes that way—we grew them from small vines grown in pots.

But the seeds germinated, much to his surprise. OK, he said, "But they won't grow." When they grew bigger and started to put out leaves, he grunted skeptically but then announced that they wouldn't make flowers. They sprouted flowers. Mom was bemused to see Dad go outside daily to check on the tomato vines sprouted from seed scraped from a luncheon plate. As the vines grew taller and stronger; and as the tiny flowers unfurled into delicate white patches of color, Dad became ever more curious. Still, he insisted, the flowers won't develop.

As the flowers developed, his last pronouncement was that the second-generation Rutgers tomatoes would not produce fruit. The more he challenged what he was seeing before his eyes, the more the bemusement showed on Mom's face. As the weeks passed, the more the vines began to resemble the tomatoes found in other neighborhood gardens. That included big, firm tomatoes greening in the sun.

Thu, Dao, and **Footloose Forester** all had to leave for Hawaii before it was time to pick the tomatoes. Dao had started late in the growing season, but we knew there was going to be a crop. Mom assured us that she would pick them; and to let us know how things worked out. As the first frost of autumn came on, Mom picked over 40 tomatoes and finished the ripening process by putting them in a sunny location, just as the dried seeds had begun their venture.

The story of tomato vines from a dinner plate was told and retold many times, especially by Mom who was mightily impressed by Dao's simple determination and faith in what she was doing.

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Persona Non Grata

Every person, at some time or another, lets negative thoughts creep into their consciousness. Usually the thoughts of negative episodes in life come back again and again over the years. It does not happen too often among happy people, but there is hardly a person who is able to completely flush out the negatives and never allow them back into their thoughts. This somber chronicle is a short compilation of several times when the **Footloose Forester** was *persona non grata*.

Perhaps the harshest brush off in his forestry career occurred when he announced to his colleagues in Trinidad that his findings about growth characteristics of their prized teak plantations were contrary to what they always believed. In his Master of Science in Forestry thesis, he included tables of comparisons of growth characteristics that dispelled the notion that the Trinidad teak was of the highest quality and productive growth. Nobody wanted to challenge him on his findings because he had facts on his side and they had only their long-standing opinions. In too many offices and lunchrooms around the world, however, opinions usually trump facts. And a little bit of loud force major never hurts in attempting to win an argument.

It would be most unfair if this chronicle turns into a petulant justification of a personal point-of-view. It would also be unfair if readers judge it as a rant against some perceived injustice against the **Footloose Forester**. The intention is to relate a clear and accurate description of certain events, with the hope that someone, somewhere, someday sees the situation for what it really was.

The Footloose Forester deduced that he was *Persona Non Grata* in other circumstances, in other places and at various times in his career. The example transcribed below is but one of those examples. The example should make clear why he thought that he became *Persona Non Grata* in some circles.

Making Comments on Official Reports also Makes Enemies

*The **Footloose Forester** often made comments about reports submitted by others. Sometimes he was encouraged to comment, and thus was doing precisely what he was asked to do. The result, however, was usually resentment for spoiling the vision of someone else. At the risk of making somebody's enemies list, he usually went ahead. Otherwise, the international development community, or someone in the sciences, might go forward with a presumption that needed to be challenged. One or two poignant examples come to mind.*

*After spending nearly two years on a mission to countries in Asia, South America and, finally in Kenya, a three-person team asked for local comment on the report they were finishing up, and just prior to sending it to USAID Washington. The team leader invited the **Footloose Forester** to sit down with them as a group to hear his comments. He obliged them. Sorry, he said, but he could not agree with their basic premise that Personal Services Contractors working in behalf of USAID were treated much the same as mainline USAID career employees, and enjoyed the same benefits that came with the job. Why, they asked, did he think that was not the case? His response was because they were too many examples that clearly pointed to circumstances that were contrary to what they had put into print. A day or two later, the **Footloose Forester** returned to see the team leader and handed him a typed list of 28 exceptions that indicated that PSCs were not the equivalents of direct-hire USAID employees. From that day forward, the **Footloose Forester** had new adversaries. Although a few USAID employees who were personal friends tried to dissuade him from his viewpoint, nobody in the local USAID office; or in Washington, D.C., ever challenged his views in writing. In fact, nobody officially acknowledged that there was a long list of exceptions to the main premises that formed the body of the team's report.*

*For anyone who is skeptical that the encounter was anything other than a tempest in a teapot, the following attached commentary from 1993 is provided. An additional list of the 28 exceptions was included, but is not provided here. The bulletized list was reduced to 24 items after some of the original items were resolved or removed. Some of the important exceptions like PSC access to US Embassy health units, and the permitted use of diplomatic mail were corrected shortly after the draft report was released for review and comment. The **Footloose Forester** thus had a direct say in changing some of the benefits to which PSCs had not previously been entitled. But rather than make new friends among the 600-800 PSCs worldwide, he only made (presumably) new antagonists in Washington, D.C. The longish commentary is not shown here, but is still retained in his personal archives.*

USAID AND THE PERSONAL SERVICES CONTRACTOR

Comments by Richard Pellek

Personal Services Contractor

U.S. Agency for International Development

Regional Economic Development Services Office

for East and Southern Africa REDSO/ESA

Nairobi, Kenya

(1993)



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The French Connection

Just this morning as he arose from sleep and from a dream that would be the basis for a new chronicle entry, the **Footloose Forester** mentioned to his soulmate, the Bengal Tiger, that he was going to start a new story. She asked, “about what?” He replied with just two words, “Christian Pieri.” Her quick response was also composed of only a few words. She replied, “the French Connection.”

Those few words sent his head spinning. Not only had she immediately conjured up an important part of the story that had occurred over 40 years ago, but had given a suitable title to this chronicle. Furthermore, she had established a key link and further verification that we were true soulmates who shared our lives and thoughts in countless ways.

It has never been easy to tell some legacy stories and roll them into a coherent chronicle form because a few of them like **The French Connection** coalesced out of snippets from the past that included brief flashes of memories gathered from Hawaii, Senegal, France, and Washington, D.C. Thanks to the induced prompting from last night’s dream, this rambling chronicle has finally been born.

As an added reminder of the peripatetic career of the **Footloose Forester**, the old, original banner heading genre of **On the road...again!!!** was chosen for emphasis of the fact that both Christian Pieri and the **Footloose Forester** were on the road when they originally met.

Christian Pieri was a French agricultural researcher who was on sabbatical to the University of Hawaii from this post in Senegal where he was improving dryland agriculture in West Africa through scientific applications of improved methods. When he gave a seminar on his research topic on the hard clay soils of the region to the faculty and staff of the College of Tropical Agriculture, the **Footloose Forester** was in attendance. He recalls that Pieri described the dominant soils in that part of Senegal as having the texture and consistency of Portland Cement. When dry they are powdery but when only slightly whetted they firm up to an extreme hardness that makes rain fed agriculture almost impossible. After the seminar, the **Footloose Forester** went to meet him. That introduction in Honolulu, Hawaii was the first of several encounters that eventually spanned three continents and as many decades. Along the way there were a few truly bizarre episodes that some readers might think were made up or embellished. One reason that **The French Connection** is bound for his personal archives is because some stuff you just can’t make up.

Shortly after the Portland Cement soils of Senegal seminar, the **Footloose Forester** invited Christian Pieri and his family to our apartment in Honolulu. His wife Vivette and his two young daughters came for dinner on a beautiful Sunday afternoon. He presented Thu with a radiant white Dendrobium Orchid encased in the half shell of a coconut husk. Although we fretted about where we should display it and how we should care for it, the gifted orchid turned out to be a near miracle in our midst. The absolutely dry interior of the coconut husk wasn't going to hold much water, so keeping a normally moisture loving orchid hydrated was going to be a challenge. Secondly, the coconut husk was designed with a hook that was intended to be hung on a wall. For whatever reason, we decided to hang it on the wall of the hot, sun-drenched lanai facing the Ko 'olau Mountains where it might just possibly receive enough daily mist from the seasonal showers to keep its moisture balance. Yes, it was hot during the afternoon sunshine, and yes, the frequent winds tended to dry out the interior of the coconut husk...but that beautiful white Dendrobium Orchid stayed in full bloom for two solid months. A miracle? Maybe. But it was an episode that you just can't make up, and just another example in life where truth is sometimes stranger than fiction.

Several years after the orchid in a coconut husk episode in Hawaii, the **Footloose Forester** is delighted to add a 2017 photo taken in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Many orchids in many coconut shells, a graphic example of how various cultures share similar concepts.



Chunks of natural charcoal are inserted to retain moisture

The following spring, Christian and his family kindly invited us to celebrate an Easter meal at their small apartment, provided for visiting professors and their families on sabbatical. In keeping with a French tradition, the menu itself was handwritten in ink by Christian himself and presented to us. We were so impressed that the very same Easter menu is kept as a part of our treasured memories.

Christian Pieri was free to use the laboratory facilities offered by the College of Tropical Agriculture, thus some of his experiments were conducted in the same soils lab where the **Footloose Forester** did most of his own soils research. It was during one of those routine lab visits when another event got hard-wired into the memory of the **Footloose Forester**. It started out with a distress call for help by one of the other graduate students who was also working in that lab. Niwat was a Thai national who was studying for a Ph.D. in Soil Science, and Abdul Aziz was a Pakistani Ph.D. candidate who was working alongside him at the next lab bench. Although they both spoke English as a second language, neither of them could come up with the term for the electrical adapter that Niwat needed to marry his apparatus to the array of electrical receptors found in the old laboratory. Niwat seemed frantic and was looking everywhere, repeating several times that he needed

a connection, a connection, a compatible connector (an adapter) to plug into. Christian Pieri then reached into his drawer and came up with, Viola, *'the French Connection.'* His words, not mine. We all had a good laugh as he handed over his own personal adapter that he had brought with him from France. Some things you just can't make up.

At another time, Christian approached the **Footloose Forester** and asked him something about the applied mathematics of the inverse sine in a research paper he was reading. Sheepishly, the **Footloose Forester** struggled with the explanation because he had too soon forgotten that the inverse sine and its application was part of a math course he had just recently finished. It was a brief moment, but the memory stuck.

It was at least two years later that **Footloose Forester** and Christian Pieri met again, in the dusty little village of Bombay, Senegal. Christian had returned to Senegal and his ORSTOM (Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique d' Outre-Mer) supported research after his sabbatical in Hawaii was over. The **Footloose Forester** knew where to look for him and was determined to make contact. So, when the **Footloose Forester** showed up at his modest quarters unannounced, we made the most of the encounter. Another French researcher was also there and jokingly inquired about whether or not the skinny, unrefrigerated kielbasa sticks that **Footloose Forester** brought along as gifts were going to make us all sick. After all, the 20-25 sticks that had been purchased at a flea market in New Jersey some weeks earlier were wrapped in plain butcher paper and were unrefrigerated during the long journeys from New York to Dakar, Senegal and during the road trip from Dakar to Bombay. The other man also jokingly asked whether or not I had been sick from eating them. The answer that popped out of my mouth was, *"pas encore."* We all laughed and then proceeded to snack on kielbasa sticks.

It is true that memory is often selective and sometimes only certain fragments contain enough hard-wiring ingredients to sustain them over decades of fond reveries. Thusly, the **Footloose Forester** doesn't remember the mechanisms whereby Christian Pieri and his family and the **Footloose Forester** again made contact. But the events came into focus in the south of France when Vivette Pieri met us at the train station and drove us to her house in Montpellier. My wife and I do remember staying in a sunlit bedroom overlooking an active winery, with its rows of grape vines only steps beyond the end of the Pieri's tiled patio. Our shoebox of photos still contains a few scenes of the pink flamingos on the shores of the Mediterranean, and of our hosts clad in warm clothing to protect them from the wind.

Christian was a happy man in his chosen profession as an agriculturist and enjoyed showing the **Footloose Forester** around his homeland laboratories in Montpellier. When he was dropped off at the ORSTOM lab the first time, the **Footloose Forester** couldn't help but notice that Christian was wearing a scuba weight belt to hold up his pants. Unabashedly, Christian mentioned that he earned his scuba credentials at the Jacques Cousteau facility nearby. That memory is one of the hard-wired ones.

The final face-to-face memory of *The French Connection* and his family was at the train station at Montpellier. They had arranged to book us on the super fast Train de Grande Vitesse from Montpellier to Paris. Speeds on France's version of the bullet train now exceed 320 kph (200 mph) along some stretches.

The years have rolled along but our fond memories of Christian Pieri and his family have not weakened much. His oldest daughter went on to study agronomy, probably at The University of Nancy where Christian earned his Ph.D. He spent most of his career in the field and conducted research in over 50 countries, including Brazil

and China. He retired as a Vice President of the Rural Development Sector of The World Bank in Washington, D.C. The French Government also honored him with a Gold Medal of Academie d'Agriculture for excellence in performance during his lifetime of service. In his years on the road, the **Footloose Forester** has met only a few great men, but proud to say...Christian Pieri is one of them.

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On Mathematics and Nightmares

Maybe the title of this vignette should be, **On Nightmares and Mathematics**. As an adult, the **Footloose Forester** does not have many nightmares, but when they disturb his sleep, most of the unpleasant dreams are about his unpreparedness for taking exams. Exams in the past, happy to say! Or dreams about hypothetical situations in the past that never actually happened. For example, one remembered nightmare was about his unpreparedness to take an exam in microeconomic theory. In the dream, he was registered for the class in night school at Rutgers, but fretted about taking the final exam because he had not studied for the test; indeed he had not even attended the classes except for the first one. Yet, he learned from other students that one final exam problem was likely to be about constructing a non-linear graph. The most worrisome part for him was how to assign relevant data to the prospective problem and then graph the results with calculus. Fortunately, it was only a bad dream.

In his waking hours, he is awful at calculus, so perhaps the fear of being found out is what causes him to avoid letting anybody know how incapable he is. The problem has always been that other branches of mathematics, as well, have also been difficult for him. Yet, as a college student, then as a Graduate Student, he was not only expected to take various courses in mathematics, but was expected to be competent in them. Passing an undergraduate math course was one thing, but Graduate Students were assumed to be brighter, thus more competent in mathematics. He was not and never would be competent in math, particularly in abstract fields such as calculus and Boolean algebra.

In fact, he cannot even understand most of the equations he created and solved satisfactorily in the past, as part of his studies and dissertation. So the **Footloose Forester** is ever embarrassed in even mentioning one of his published works that contains a mathematical description with actual project parameters, because he can no longer explain the steps or solve the equation.

This episode in confessions and soul-searching continues: Once, as a Graduate Student, and fresh out of a course in college algebra and pre-calculus, he was approached by a French Grad Student who asked him about the proper application of the inverse sine. His friend asked because he knew that the **Footloose Forester** had just completed the class in which inverse sine functions had been covered. It didn't matter; the **Footloose Forester** at first didn't comprehend the mathematical expression, then struggled with explaining how to solve

the problem. He clearly remembers telling the Frenchman that, although he had been exposed to formal math instruction very recently, math was simply not part of him. It just does not stick.

Most of the exams he fretted about were some applications of mathematics; and, consequently, most of his nightmares involved trying to solve math problems. Once, he joined a course in Advanced Forest Mensuration in which Matrix Algebra was being applied to inventory problems. The other students had already taken the basic Mensuration course, so they knew enough matrix algebra to cope with the work. The **Footloose Forester** had to buy a book and learn matrix algebra on his own, in order to keep up with the others because he hadn't taken the basic course in Mensuration there. There were a few other nightmares about math during those times.

One of those other nightmares he remembers was at the same school, the University of Florida. That nightmare was about a real problem, and it was another one about applied mathematics. In his nightmare, he could not resolve the correct number of variables in the "degrees of freedom" entry for a problem in Analysis of Variance. Fortunately, he did solve the problem in his sleep, and when his sub-conscious told him that his answer was correct, he jumped out of bed and went into the dark of night to his laboratory to change his inputs accordingly.

This chronicle is about nightmares and the past and present fear of failing with mathematics. But one of the dreams about math problems was not so haunting to the **Footloose Forester**, personally. Rather, it was a nighttime re-creation of a mathematical solution offered that very morning by another Graduate Student in a class in Clay Mineralogy. Vince Elder, the Grad Student offering the solution to the professor who taught the class, had graduated with a B.S. in Chemistry. The professor admitted that he did not know of Elder's approach, so Vince Elder patiently suggested that, in order to quantify the percentage composition of three minerals in a sample, we could use simultaneous equations of three algebraic functions. That is to say, we could solve all three equations at the same time by combining them into one equation. At that stage of his academic development, the **Footloose Forester** had enough algebra still in his system so that he could actually solve the equations himself. But he also knew that without putting down the problem in his class notebook, he would never be able to do it again.

Vince Elder was such a smart but humble guy, that he took the time to help the **Footloose Forester** with solving chemical equilibrium problems, as well. Although the typical equilibrium problem required several steps, so that it took up nearly a full page to get to the answer, Vince said (ever so modestly) that he could tell what the answer was going to be by just looking at the original set of equations. The **Footloose Forester** was always awed by Vince Elder's intelligence. Mathematics, however, is still the type of nightmare most feared to return.



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Looking for Suzie

When we lived in Honolulu, Thu and the **Footloose Forester** chose to seek out a church where we would be comfortable. The very old, traditional, but decidedly frumpy cathedral in Waikiki had far fewer parishioners than we thought was appropriate for its size; and just maybe some local families also thought the same thing, since we could not see many worshipers that were readily identified as families. We liked to attend services early, and it was an easy walk from our condo just two blocks away. Early services were never more than 10% filled. Of course, the later Masses had lots of tourists from the mainland, so they tended to be too crowded for our liking. You have to give credit to the pastor, however; one of the later Masses was sung in the Hawaiian language, so was unique in its own way.

One time we remember attending when a young woman was the sole cantor at a later Mass. She must have been a professional singer because her cadence and tonal range was so incredible that we were mesmerized just listening to her. But she was scheduled for the 10:30A.M. Mass, and we were not keen in being tied up in the swell of traffic during those hours.

Then there was the inconspicuous church behind a shopping center. We attended that one after we moved from one apartment to another. It was convenient because it was right behind the Holiday Mart, a supermarket that was open on Sundays, and for 24 hours a day. Frankly, we must admit, the pastor did not connect with his parishioners and he himself seemed to be bored during each and every service. The reason we thought so was because he would yawn several times throughout the Mass. It got to be so annoying that we started picking up on his yawning, even counting how many times he yawned. We called him Father Sleepy.

After attending a few other churches, Thu and the **Footloose Forester** decided that we liked the young priests and sisters (and a couple of older ones) at the Sacred Heart Church just across from the Punahou School where Barack Obama attended as a youngster. Sacred Heart Parish was vibrant and had lots of folks who acted young and who sang the religious songs with gusto. Sacred Heart had a real sense of community and we were happy to join in that community.

Sacred Heart also had Suzie. Suzie was an 11 year old Japanese girl who caused the **Footloose Forester** to act in a strange way. A few months after we started going exclusively to Sacred Heart, the **Footloose Forester** noticed that he broke into a smile every time he spotted Suzie coming in with her mother. They would sit somewhere

in front of us, so had to pass by. Usually we were early, and when Suzie passed by, Thu would notice a smile starting to spread on his face. The more we attended, the bigger the smile was.

Since we usually didn't talk in church, after a while Thu started to look for the smile on the face of the **Footloose Forester** when Suzie passed by.

Eventually, he himself started to question why the uncontrollable smile came over him. Finally, one day he figured it out. Each time he looked at 11 year old Suzie (a name he chose to remember her by) he was seeing a young version of his future wife. What a privilege, to look into the past and see the girl that you were going to marry! So each and every time Suzie passed by, he thought that she looked exactly like, and acted like Thu. Perhaps it was fantasy, but just seeing Suzie filled his heart with joy. His wide smiles gave his joy away. He, of course, told Thu, but only after he was able to explain what had come over him. She confirmed that when she was eleven years old, she did look and act almost exactly like Suzie.

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By Dick Pellek

Dolie, The Traveler

There is no getting around the fact that the pets in the life of the **Footloose Forester** provided thousands of pleasant memories. Some people say that you can love a human, but then shy away from using the word “love” when it comes to pets. Who really cares about the semantics, and what other people think about loving or not loving pets? The dogs and cats in his life were closer to him than most human beings could ever be.

This memoir will never be adequate, but it will give the writer great pleasure in the attempt to capture some of the joyful moments of his life. Where to start and how to proceed will be an adventure, in itself. He might as well start with the first thought that popped into his head. It would be about our dog Dolie, the female mixed longhair breed that did the most traveling. Dolie, the traveler, was the one who was born in Pennsylvania but lived in other countries where she accompanied her family; first, to West Africa, then to Haiti.

Warm first memories of Dolie are about her as a jogging partner for **Footloose Forester** when they lived in Pennsylvania. He routinely jogged in the neighborhood and she always wanted to go with him. Usually, it was early enough in the morning that he did not even think about putting her on a leash. Yes, there was a leash law in Findlay Township, but he resisted following that law every time he could get away with it. When it was still dark, or when he went to the woods on a job, or merely to explore, he let Dolie run free. There was a leash in the car, and he used it in cases of doubt, or where there were farm dogs too close to where he came and left the woods. But part of the pleasure was always seeing Dolie run free, the way dogs are meant to be. There was a difference, however, in her attitude when it came to jogging. Dolie liked to run, but not too far.

Morning jogs were usually in response to favorable opportunities or the current circumstances, such as when he didn't have a job, or when he had enough time. The more time he had free, the longer the jogs. Dolie was always eager to start, and they began by turning left along their property line. The property line to the left was the starting point. Dolie knew exactly where that property line was. The joggers followed one of several courses; usually the short course along the horseshoe-shaped Escalon to the corner of Escalon Drive and Cranbrooke Drive; and then back along Cranbrooke until they passed their house and ended up at the starting point at the property line on Escalon beyond the house. As time and circumstances permitted, we doubled the loop on Escalon and added a leg up to the end of Cranbrooke where we turned around. That route was about 1½ miles. Eventually, the **Footloose Forester** expanded the range to 3 miles, then to four or more. When he and Dolie worked up to the 6-mile route, Dolie got smart. She jogged cheerfully to the end of the property line,

flopped down and then waited until the **Footloose Forester** showed up on his return leg. She did this every time she thought that it was going to be a long run.

Dolie loved to chase rabbits. There were plenty of them when we first moved to the house on Escalon Drive. In the early evening, she waited for us to go out with her around the neighborhood so that she could chase rabbits. Then, when we took a job in the semi-arid country of Cape Verde, she discovered that although there were very few rabbits there, she could chase wild guinea hens in the hills around our rural residence. She never caught a guinea hen because they were much faster than even the occasional rabbit. One time, however, Dolie did see a rabbit close to our house and set into immediate pursuit. The poor rabbit was so frightened that he made a wrong turn and Dolie actually caught up with him. Gentle Dolie killed that rabbit. When we caught up with her, she actually showed shame on her face. It was the first rabbit she had ever caught up with in Cape Verde, and it was clear from that look in her eyes that she did not intend to hurt the rabbit. Her chasing game had gone awry.

Getting to Cape Verde in the cargo hold of an airplane was a worrisome affair for Dolie. Thu arranged for the flight out of JFK in New York, and it cost over \$700 to send her in an animal carrier. Thu's ticket cost only \$400 or so. Money was never an object when it came to her pets, but **Footloose Forester** did not learn of the travel details until the very end of the trip. As it turned out, there were several bittersweet moments in the final hours of transit.

As he waited for her arrival at the terminal on Sal Island, Cape Verde, he could see the South African Airways jumbo jet carrying Thu and Dolie taxi into the terminal area; and he watched for their deplaning. Thu came into the terminal and announced that Dolie would be released from the cargo area shortly. She was not. When **Footloose Forester** went to the doorway to look for more baggage being offloaded, in the background he could hear Thu talking with the ticket agent, who spoke English. When the young girl patiently told Thu that there was no dog scheduled for offloading at Sal Island, Thu insisted that she check for herself in the baggage area. Then **Footloose Forester** heard something that he will never forget. Thu said, "He loves that dog more than he loves me, so my dog better be back there." There was no dog in the baggage area. At that stage, she further insisted that we be allowed to check within the airplane, itself. That was when the baggage handlers discovered a barking dog that heard the voice of **Footloose Forester**.

They put the animal carrier on the tarmac and opened it. **Footloose Forester** remembers being bowled over and lavished with nearly a hundred kisses as he lay flat on his back on the hot tarmac and in the blazing sun. One of the happiest moments of his life? Oh, yeah!

We had to change to a small, two engine prop plane for the 30-minute flight to Sao Tiago, the island where we lived. The short runway on that rugged volcanic island could not handle jumbo jets because the runway was too short. Of all the Cape Verde Islands, Sal Island was the only one that could handle jumbo jets in those days. The even shorter runways on all the other islands always made for exciting experiences. But packing that bulky pet carrier in the limited cargo space of the prop plane owned by Transportes Aereos de Cabo Verde meant that the **Footloose Forester** and Thu had to pass within arm's reach of Dolie when they entered through the door to the passenger's cabin. Dolie saw them--and barked her displeasure about her separation all the way to their destination. The other passengers were annoyed at the noise.

Dolie insisted on going to the field with the **Footloose Forester**, wherever that was and whenever that was. In the warm, dry conditions of Cape Verde that meant that the passenger side window on his project vehicle was always open. It was forever a joy to see her big ears flapping as she poked her head out to inspect her surroundings. On weekends the family usually went to the beach; to swim, to fish, or to explore the coastline. Dolie always went along. She did not usually show an interest in swimming, but she did go in if she thought that the **Footloose Forester** was in danger. One time when he was nearly a hundred yards offshore and beyond her recognition as she patrolled the beach, she barked up a storm when she lost sight of him. When he called out, she jumped into the surf to swim out to rescue him. He usually did not stay in the water at those times because sometimes there were jellyfish that she could not see.

Exploring on land often was not any easier because of the rough surfaces of the volcanic rock, or the sandburs. One time when **Footloose** and Dolie explored alone, they went more than a mile beyond the beach everybody knew. They found a very small white sand beach that they had all to themselves. It was so remote from where people lived and the coastline was so inaccessible, they knew that it was special. Beaches of white sand are not really common in Cape Verde. The dark basaltic parent material of many beaches was black—and hot to the feet. On the way back, just shortly after leaving the water line, Dolie sat down and; with her eyes, told **Footloose Forester** that she had a problem. When he approached, she lifted her paw to show him that she had walked through a patch of sandburs. The sandburs were tough and they were nearly everywhere. After removing a few burs from between her paws, he knew it was going to be a long trip back to the main beach where Thu was waiting. He hefted her 80 pounds on his shoulders and, at that moment, added a precious memory for a future daydream. It seemed like a longer trip back, with the extra 80 pounds on his shoulders.



Dolie and Thu on the desert pavement of Sao Tiago, Cape Verde

In the photo above Dolie and Thu rest on a windswept ridge overlooking the desolate shoreline of São Tiago Island. Notice the desert pavement of remnant stones too heavy to be blown away by the wind. Notice also that there is not a single green leaf anywhere. It was tough for Cape Verdeans to make a living in such an environment.

It would not be the only time that Dolie had a problem with her paws. A few years later, the bottoms of both front paws became separated and bloody along a rocky trail. That episode was in Haiti when she and **Footloose Forester** were climbing the trail beyond their house above Port-au-Prince, to the main mountain road near Kenskoff. Most of the trail was rocky, but **Footloose** was not aware that anything was wrong until they were on their way back down. Again, Dolie just sat down at the side of the trail and refused to get up. Once again, she offered up her paw to show that she had a problem. She got another ride on his shoulders; and a later trip to the vet.

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Lost Bag in Lisbon

Long known as the poor man of Europe, Portugal has consistently had an economy that lagged behind other movers and shakers in modern European society. And that is perhaps the secret in the hidden delights of the unpretentious Portuguese and their contented way of life. The land and the architecture and the wine are all things that a traveler discovers are delightful, thus that same traveler can share in the contentment.

The **Footloose Forester** had an opportunity to spend some time in Portugal on official business; and some unplanned time when his luggage went off to Africa without him. In more than 20 years of travel by air, he had never lost a piece of luggage nor had his bags diverted beyond retrieval. That long streak of good luck ceased when, one midnight at a very quiet airport boarding gate, he was denied entry onto his plane to Cape Verde although it sat on the tarmac for a full 20 minutes while he watched helplessly. The ticket takers must have thought that it was OK to close the gates 10 or 15 minutes early because they did not see any passengers. **Footloose Forester** knew the departure time and the boarding time, but he didn't count on someone wanting to quit his post a little early. So his bags flew off to Senegal. They got returned to Lisbon the next day, but in the meantime, the **Footloose Forester** had to take a taxi into Lisbon and wait it out. As was usual for him, he spent several hours walking and exploring the city. There was one pretty good American movie showing, so killing time was not so bad.

The research for documents related to the Cape Verde Islands that brought him to Portugal in the first place did not yield much because the material was scattered all over the city, and the stuff he was looking for was very limited in detail. If one looks, one may find treasure, but only the person who looks will find it. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

A few years later he had another episode with lost/delayed bags. He thought that the ticket agent at Jan Smuts Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa might have been a little hasty in sending his bag along the conveyor belt without a destination tag. Not that she was busy; on the contrary, she may have been daydreaming. At the time he checked in there was nobody in front of him, and nobody behind him. It should not have been a distracting situation for her. But he did not see his suitcase for more than a year.

After he picked it up in Nairobi, he then planned how he was going to deliver the message that was still inside. The person who gave him the note the previous year also requested that he deliver it to his colleague Margaret. Luckily, Margaret was still in Nairobi, so at the next staff meeting, the **Footloose Forester** stood up and announced that come rain, wind, or high water, he was, like a postal carrier, carrying out his duty to deliver the message as he had promised to deliver. Margaret was thankful, but she said that the message was really not important.

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Sponges That Tastes Good

Since ancient times the use of natural sponges for bathing has been a mark of civilization. Imagine: scrubbing your back with the lifeless form of a sea creature that was obtained in the warm waters of the Mediterranean or the Red Sea. Worldwide commerce in sponges from the Mediterranean or Middle East was proof that tradesmen, sponge divers and mariners all were involved in supplying a commodity that was not only a vanity but was also recognized as a decadent luxury. Never mind that sponges existed in well-defined ecosystems and had specific requirements that marked them as unique creatures. Despite the fact that neither a nobleman nor a knave really required a Red Sea sponge to bathe, a brisk trade in sponges continued for centuries.

After the discovery of ways to manufacture artificial sponges, the sale and utilization of sponges for cleaning dishes increased dramatically. The petroleum-derived sponge was better at soaking up water and other liquids, but lacked the toughness and durability of natural sponges.

One of the most interesting of sponges does not cost the life of a sea creature or depend upon a manufacturing process which utilizes fossil fuels. In fact, this one is a renewable resource. This one is an edible climbing vine. Vines in general can produce useful crops in small, restricted growing areas. One of the most versatile of vines in Haiti is the torchon or luffa, Luffa acutangula, also known as the eponge vegetale (French) or the Dish-cloth gourd (English).

As a vine, it literally grows up the side of a house, provides a pleasant array of leaves that can decorate drab plain surfaces, requires very little soil to get it started, uses sparse, natural rainfall to sustain itself and culminates in a handsome and versatile crop. The tender green and immature gourds of the luffa (up to 20 cm length and 5-6 cm in diameter) make a tasty ingredient in soups or as a steamed vegetable, but the mature gourd is an even more interesting specimen. The luffa is a double-duty vegetable sponge (up to 40 cm length and 7-8 cm diameter). On the other hand, it makes a superior sponge for washing dishes in the kitchen and scrubbing of backs in the bathroom. Because it is stiff yet gentle to the skin, it also can be used as a back scratcher, or massaging the back of someone with whom you are intimate enough to bring up the subject. It also lasts a long time.

These yuppy sponges used to bring about \$3.50 each in the marketplace. A few seeds can grow into a network that produces dozens of gourds. At our house in Port-au-Prince, Haiti a few seeds in the ground eventually climbed four meters up the side of the house; a pair of stems twined their way 23 meters around the patio guard rail, and added to our privacy from the outside, even as we enjoyed watching them grow from the inside. In the end, we ate about two dozen tender ones and harvested a dozen more as dried sponges. One of the larger sponges contained 360 seeds, so we had plenty to start the process all over again and enough to share with friends.

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Golf is Great in the Dominican Republic

As a country right next door to Haiti, and occupying about 2/3 of the Island of Hispaniola, the Dominican Republic was also a pleasure in contrasts. The **Footloose Forester** went there several times, on business and for pleasure. The business part had mostly to do with the Agroforestry Outreach Project in Haiti. As neighbors, we consulted back and forth regarding nursery technology, outreach programs, program implementation issues, and the like. Some of the contacts were smooth and fruitful; but one or two were a bit thorny. On one occasion, the **Footloose Forester** was urged by his Project Manager in Haiti to visit the USAID office in Santa Domingo with a particular objective in mind. The Project Officer, a Direct-Hire USAID employee set the trip up, starting with the mandatory notification by cable to his counterpart that **Footloose** was coming. But that counterpart of his Project Manager was out of the office when **Footloose** arrived, so he explained to the only other USAID employee in the office what his mission was, and the fact that a cable authorizing the trip describing his mission had already been sent. That routine protocol gesture did not deter the Dominican counterpart (a white American) from laying into **Footloose** and threatening to send him back to Haiti, for the audacity of working in the USAID library without his knowledge. **Footloose Forester** really enjoyed such encounters. The first thing he said was that he would be happy to close his notepad, go pack his things and leave the country. Then he would go ask his Project Manager to contact his counterpart and ask him why he did not read the authorizing cable, nor permit **Footloose Forester** to conduct his mission. There seem to be too many autocrats in USAID who think that the country they are working in is their country, and that they can order people out, if they so choose.

A more pleasant working visit was later worked out with more satisfactory logistics. **Footloose Forester** got authorization to travel by auto across the border into the western part of the country and visit with project associates in the field before having to lock horns with bureaucrats in Santa Domingo. It was also an adventure in contrasts on the ground, just as the contrast in the landscape of the border region between the Dominican Republic and Haiti can be seen in satellite photographs. On the Dominican side the landscape appears green in photos; on the Haiti side it is decidedly brown and barren. So it was as he approached the border crossing in low gear along a narrow, deeply rutted and unpaved road on the Haiti side. Once through the seldom-visited immigration hut, he quickly accelerated into high gear along a paved road.

The Dominican Republic was proud of its golf courses. The **Footloose Forester** had planned for years to play there, and during one short vacation period, he played twice. Details about the planning are obscure now, but

he remembers driving east out of Santa Domingo early in the morning to be at the golf course early enough to work out any tee time arrangement that might be posed to him. About 10-15 miles before he reached his destination, he remembers coming into a medium sized town while it was still dark. The town enforced their speed limit by digging shallow trenches across the road at strategic places at either end of town. When you hit one of those trenches in the dark, it makes your teeth rattle and the underside of the car gets a more severe jolt. After finding out the hard way going to the golf course, **Footloose Forester** was prepared on the way back, again in the dark after the sun went down. This time he pulled off to verify that the trenches were indeed cut out of the blacktop road material to a depth of 6-8 inches.

By the way, he played alone on a great golf course. The other more famous course at Punta Cana was a few miles away and had a waiting list, so he accepted a tee time to play on another Robert Trent Jones course. He was even allowed to walk, something he always preferred to do when he had the chance. The next day, choosing which course to play on was not an issue.

On another trip, or a previous one, **Footloose Forester** arrived by air after midnight. He rented a car at the airport and started into town but decided that he was far too tired to look for a hotel at that late hour. So he drove just far enough to give himself a good start in the morning. He stopped at one of the few cabanas that still had their lights on, and asked for a room. They wanted payment in advance, but then handed him a towel, a piece of soap (unwrapped and previously used), a partial roll of toilet paper; and a condom. Standard issue, one presumes, for cheap cabanas far from the lights of the city.



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La Pizza In Tutto Il Mondo

While finishing a slice of hot pizza from an undistinguished establishment not usually known for good pizza (Sam's Club in Salisbury, Maryland), the Bengal Tiger and The Bear started to recall some of the places where their past ventures into pizza-dom had taken them. The memories included the places where the pizza was good, but especially where the pizza was horrible. The memories put us both...On the road....again!

Since many, if not most, pizza parlors are family run eateries whose business names mean nothing to strangers, there is not much point in naming individual establishments. However, there is room for a few exceptions, starting with the pizza places in the **Footloose Forester's** hometown of Netcong, New Jersey. It was in the early 1950s that he first became aware of the widespread popularity of pizza parlors as venues rivaling hamburger joints in the social scheme of adolescents. He was unaware at that time that Netcong would eventually rank highest on his list of places that had great pizza. And that is why he makes an exception in naming a couple of places in the Netcong area. Sam's Beautiful Day in Chicago Pizza was his all-time favorite in those days. Carmine's was also high on his list; and fortunately for local residents, Carmine's is still going strong, some 60 years later.

But the most enjoyable part of the conversation with his Bengal Tiger wife about pizza was all about the lousy pizza we had shared; and a few that the **Footloose Forester** shared with his brother Joe in far off places. Some of the grotesque stuff that was served up overseas begs for their inclusion in The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly portfolio. In no particular order or chronology, then; here were a few of the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly ones:

The Tiger and The Bear were eager to enjoy a pizza in Haiti, having been away from the United States for a couple of years or more; so when we heard that a new pizza place had opened up on the Route de Delmas, we went to check it out. You can't tell a book from its cover...and you can't tell a pizza from its menu. When it came to our table, we despaired to know that they used American cheese. After we shared the tale with friends, we went back with those friends to prove to them that we were not making stuff up.

Another big disappointment was at the local Pizza Hut, not long after we moved to Virginia. Although the **Footloose Forester** remembers having one of the best pizzas at a Pizza Hut in Hilo, Hawaii 35 years earlier, something has gone badly wrong over the years. We gave up going to the local Pizza Hut in the Pittsburgh area, prior to our moving, because the quality of the pizza dropped off so dramatically that we refused to go back into that place. The quality was merely bad. We all know it's all about the ingredients and the preparation;

but when the consistency and the expectations of quality are gone, it's time to look elsewhere. That is why we were willing to give the local Pizza Hut franchise in our new neighborhood a try. Sadly, when the crust turned out to be from Bisquick flour, we decided then and there not to go back. No wonder the Sam's Club no name, no brand pizza ranks so high.

Bengal Tiger and her hubby also agreed that the street vendor pizza we had in the Waikiki District of Honolulu was not only bad...it was ugly. Ironically, the chef who prepared it and served it up from his tiny little kiosk was an Italian who could barely speak English. Not a knock on his ethnical background, but a big knock on such disgusting fare. We wondered how he could stay in business. Which leads into a segue about another Italian pizza... in Florence, Italy.

Brother Joe was the one who suggested we go for pizza when he and **Footloose Forester** were both on leave in Europe. And it was Joe who, by far, frequented more pizza parlors where ever he went. Thus, he also knew a thing or two about how good pizza is made and what good pizza tastes like. Unfortunately, neither he nor the **Footloose Forester** liked what they brought out to us, as we sat outside in a pleasant, sunny plaza. Maybe we were deluded into thinking we knew anything about genuine Italian pizza. But, on the other hand; Netcong, New Jersey where we both grew up was known as an Italian town; and both Sam Olivo who owned Sam's Beautiful Day in Chicago and Carmine's were as Italian as it gets. By the way, Joe also ordered pizza in Paris; and he didn't much like that one, either. But Paris is loaded with pizza places these days, so it is unlikely that all Paris pizza is unappealing.

Footloose Forester usually tried to have an open mind about the quality and taste of pizza prepared in other countries; after all, different people have different opinions as regards what tastes good. Not surprisingly, some of the pizza he discovered in various places had a wide range on his perceived scale of personal satisfaction. The pizza in Maseru, Lesotho was boring but edible; but the almost daily lunch or dinner of pizza in Ethiopia was most satisfying. Don't forget that the Italians previously had a long history of occupation in Ethiopia, thus great Italian food was more commonplace than might be expected.

Pizza prepared in the African home of the former Ambassador Donald DuMont stands out as having a very recherché and memorable recipe. Of course it was a creation of his wife—who was French through and through. Having lived in France and the United States; and several African counties, she probably invented recipes that others never even dreamed of. Her basic ingredients of olive oil, a few spices, and anchovies over a very thin coating of tomato sauce brought back memories of 30 years earlier when the **Footloose Forester** had enjoyed a simple style of Netcong pizza prepared in a standalone oven in the open; under the stars at the annual St. Cesario's Day fireworks near Barone's Park, and behind Rea's Tavern.



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The Many Legacies of Ginkgo biloba

Storytellers and family historians who aspire to share legacy stories of those they love sometimes find themselves searching for material that people will remember warmly and treasure deeply. Indeed, the popular website *LegacyStories.org* is dedicated to hosting the authors of legacy stories and invites them to post their personal memories with family photos, videos, anecdotes, amusing tales, and other memories that constitute legacy.

We all have tales to tell. Some people are good at storytelling but not so good at putting those stories on paper. Others are not so good at storytelling but may have fascinating tales deep within their beings that would be treasured, if only they come to light.

There are war stories, fish stories, tall tales, wives tales, and tales from the Vienna Woods. The stories don't all have to be about people because if they could talk, many a dog, cat, mongoose or gecko could tell us stories of adventure and drama that would hold us spellbound. Even rocks and trees have stories to tell. Indeed, geologists know this and they are the ones who share the legacies of rocks with the rest of the world. Trees have just as many legacy stories as anything else in nature. Many trees are downright famous.

Ancient trees share their legacy stories through their fossilized records and, for some, even their contemporaneous histories. A few species around the world have specimens that are thousands of years old. There are the giant sequoias, bristlecone pines, Eucalyptus, Kauris and a few other tree species that boast some specimens that are still living, even after 3000 years. One species, however, has already recorded hundreds of legacy stories to which thousands of people were witness--and part of the telling. The multiple legacies of the maidenhair tree, the Ginkgo biloba, are part of Chinese cultural lore. So revered is the Ginkgo in China that over 200 poems have the Ginkgo as the subject. A famous one of only four lines was written more than a thousand years ago during the Tang Dynasty by the celebrated poet and philosopher Wei Wang (701-761).

Thanks to Jimmy Shen, a Chinese botanical photographer currently living in Hangzhon, China, and thanks to the many social media sharing sites, many of us can read some of the legacy stories about people who long ago were part of the history of the Ginkgo. This chronicle also offers a broad view of the grand legacy of the species itself, as told by many of the trees, themselves.

So revered is the Ginkgo in China that stories about ginkgos go back for over two thousand years. And since some of those very trees are still alive, it is possible to visit them today and learn firsthand how some of them were saved, how they served the communities in which they are located, and why they continue to be revered as part of local cultural history.

Jimmy Shen has written a magnificent book about the genus Ginkgo (*Ginkgo, Melody of Nature*. Jimmy Shen, 2015. Ginkgo Press, Beijing: 110pp) that is filled with virtually every aspect of ginkgo lore. There are historical data about individual trees, their botanical characteristics, their height, diameter, their present location, medicinal uses (more than a dozen folk remedies), role in community aesthetics, and some aspects of community efforts to propagate and nurture them. There are also descriptions about some of the physical scars that bear witness to the past.

Of the many legacy stories about Ginkgo that stand out, many examples come from the Tiannu Mountains of Zhejiang Province in Eastern China.

The plethora of legacy stories derives from the the wide dispersion of Ginkgo as a species, their distinctiveness as forest trees that sometimes attain remarkable girth, tallness, and longevity. And of course, their longevity as individual sentinels in the forest sometimes mark them as unique in history. More than a thousand trees greater than 1000 years old are still standing, and several hundred of those are over 3000 years old. Four extant ginkgos greater than 3000 years old have been identified and their vital statistics have been documented. Data on their height, diameter at breast height (dbh), and crown area have been recorded for verification purposes. Some reliable sources say, however, that the oldest ginkgos are around 1,200 years old. With the aid of modern GPS technology, it would be feasible to develop a travel itinerary to visit some of them. Such a venture would add greatly to the lore of ecotourism.

The 1500-year-old tree shown in one photo of Shen's book is 158 feet tall and has a dbh of 15 feet. It can be seen growing near Yangjia Village in the forested region of Zhejiang Province where a few others older than 2000 years are still growing.

There are other countries where ginkgos grow and share their own legacy stories. Among the world's oldest species that date back about 200 million years, according to fossil records, it was a dominant species in North America forests about 150 million years ago but did not survive an epoch of global cooling about 7 million years ago. A few of the oldest standing ginkgos outside of China were re-introduced in the late 1700s into Europe, and later into the United States. Two notable trees in Philadelphia date from 1785 where they were re-introduced as planted exotics. Outstanding examples of old and large ginkgos can also be found in Korea, Japan and in some European countries where they were planted from seed more than a hundred years ago.

Among the tallest trees in Chinese forests, the one found at Zhan is nearly 230 feet (70m) tall. And the diameter of some specimens rival the redwoods in California. Many trees between 10-20 feet in diameter are known and have been properly cataloged.

For the most part, legacy stories recount events written by and for humans who desire to share the past with others. Inasmuch as Ginkgo trees are part of the long cultural history of China, they are the still living part of the legacy of others who have passed on. They played a role in the lives of others, and they have their own

tales to tell as actors in historical events. As perhaps no other tree species in history, Ginkgo has been studied, archived, referenced, promoted, utilized, described, and revered.

One tale of historical significance is about the inception of the Ming Dynasty and how a ginkgo tree played a role. At Baiguo Village, Zhejiang Province, there is an imposing 1,400-year-old ginkgo that stands at 98 feet tall and has a diameter of 9.8 feet at breast height. About 660 years ago, after losing a battle against his enemies, Yuanzhang Zhu retreated with his men but with the enemy forces close behind. One day when he was passing a large ginkgo tree he dismounted, climbed the tree and hid himself. He told his soldiers to take his horse and continue on. The dense foliage of the ginkgo hid him well and his enemies passed by. He escaped to fight another day. Later in the nearby Daming Mountains, he reorganized his troops and eventually won the war. Thereafter, Yuanzhang Zhu founded the Ming Dynasty.

To this day, there are many wooden storyboards adorning the trunk and branches of the historic ginkgo tree that is part of Chinese history. The boards display the names and messages of many visitors who came seeking future happiness.

Although there are notable specimens of planted Ginkgo found in botanical gardens and elsewhere around the world, the oldest and the richest of the tales about Ginkgo emanate from China where they predominate in scattered forests throughout the country. And if you want to know everything there is to know about ginkgos, there is no better source than Jimmy Shen's 2015 book--Ginkgo, Melody of Nature.

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By Dick Pellek

Aesthetic Trees

Legacy trees evolve from singular or group specimens that have had, or will become, historical, cultural, or botanical icons. The mystique and mystery of remote forests of towering giants, the wildness of tropical jungles, and the grandeur of brightly colored mountain landscapes in the autumn of the year—all paint various pictures of the natural world that have been sequestered in the minds of some of us like the **Footloose Forester**.

Just as tree seedlings in a tree plantation grow into saplings, pass through growth stages into taller and wider specimens that can be identified from afar, they eventually meet their fate. At maturity they are cut down in forest harvest operations, fall in high winds, slowly die to disease or rot, or survive for centuries to become ancient old-growth icons. The latter category of old-growth often develops concurrently with the added charm of being aesthetically appealing. Aesthetic appeal is not often considered as one of the most important qualities in multi-purpose management of forest resources, but maybe it should be.

Aesthetic appeal may not be obvious at every stage of growth but it seems to accrue as trees become older, larger and statelier. Famous and historical trees of note very often were those whose shade from their wide branches witnessed the signing of treaties, entertained classes of elementary school students, were silent accomplices for lovers, and provided year-round respite from a blazing sun. The aesthetics may or may not have been contemplated but the appeal of a broad canopy of shade has always been self-evident. Also, the shared history of human activities near and under prominent trees has contributed to the writing of the legacies of both people and the trees, themselves.

Each and every state of the United States has its own compendium of state bird, state flower, state tree, etc. and throughout the process of deciding on those distinctions, the decision makers take into account such things as local history, stature, beauty, and grandiosity. When it comes to trees, the stature, beauty, and grandiosity could arguably be summed up in the single description as aesthetic appeal. Many legacy trees in the history of ethnic groups and, indeed, the recorded history of world events undoubtedly have aesthetic aspects that can be associated with them.

Aesthetic appeal is an abstract concept that is not easily or meaningfully quantified, but it is well understood by the beholder. Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, aesthetic appeal is debatable but does not have harshly divergent outliers.

The original Charter Oak dated from the 12th or 13th century, and its hollow interior hid the Connecticut Royal Charter of 1662.

Popular history reminds us of more than a few individual trees such as the Charter Oak of Connecticut, the General Sherman and General Grant giant sequoias of California, the iconic Cedar of Lebanon that adorns the flag of a nation, and logos of rain trees (*Acacia*) in documentaries about Africa. The small city of Ceiba in northeast Puerto Rico is a standing tribute to the magnificent kapok tree, *Ceiba pentandra* that is prominent in local forests and is favored as an urban street tree. Guanacaste is the common name of the *Enterolobium cyclocarpum* that is clearly appealing and widespread in the range lands of sun drenched Guanacaste Province in Costa Rica; it is also the national tree of Costa Rica. Some of the aforementioned trees have historical significance that morphed into their legacy status but all of them have certain aesthetic qualities that distinguished them. Lord Buddha reportedly spent many formative hours under the shade of a Peepul (*Ficus religiosa*) Tree, and the Peepul Tree continues to be a prominent aspect of Hindu religious lure.

A depiction of a Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) tree adorns the flag and paper currency of Lebanon. Presumably, the aesthetic appeal prompted the choice, and now that symbolism makes the cedar a legacy tree. Perhaps no other species has a longer written history and more known legacy stories than the *Ginkgo biloba* of China. Human and botanical history is linked in the annals of Chinese culture, as made especially pertinent in the work by botanical photographer and writer Jimmy Shen. His book: (Ginkgo, Melody of Nature, Jimmy Shen, 2015. Ginkgo Press, Beijing 110pp.) sets an example of aesthetic appeal married to a thousand-year-old cultural legacy.



Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

The Concept of Rainforests

When a respondent to the Quora.com website explained why rainforests are so hot and so wet, the **Footloose Forester** was jolted into composing a rejoinder. The contributor, an airline pilot and traveler, opined that rainforests are hot because there is very little air movement above and below the canopies of tropical forests; furthermore, that all rainforests are in tropical regions. The Olympic National Park and temperate rainforest in the state of Washington is neither in the tropics nor is it particularly hot there. A cynical and somewhat snarky **Footloose Forester** believes that rainforests are defined primarily by the amount and periodicity of annual rain falling on the forest. Where in the world they are located is a secondary consideration.

The airline pilot cum Quora.com respondent further qualified his response to the question “why are rainforests so wet and hot?” with his observation that the heavy clay soils are relatively impenetrable to rainwater, thus the water must be diverted into rivers or form into ponds and swamps within the forest. That response, more than anything else, cried out for a rejoinder. Hoping to not misquote or misrepresent his answer, the **Footloose Forester** does, however; wish to comment with a few specific clarifications to demonstrate that simple explanations should be avoided because the issue is very complex. Since this chronicle may be updated in the future with additional relevant information, he is content to share his views with others now, with the understanding that there is much more to the subject matter that can be found in an expanded explanation.



Not all tropical forests are rainforests. Some are classified as dry, some as moist, some as wet, and some as rainforest.

In the very wet Ujung Kulon National Park of Indonesia, there is an anomalous landform that has soils derived from limestone and the resultant soil matrix that can be classified as silt or silty. As regards progressively smaller soil particle sizes, silt comes after sand and before clay. As a result, there are no visible signs of rainwater accumulation in the uplands that the **Footloose Forester** refers to as the Telanca Area. Although the rainfall is within the same range as other areas of Ujung Kulon, neither is there evidence of impounded water in the channels that can be recognized as stream beds. Whatever water runs off the surrounding slopes and into the channels, the highly permeable soil profile quickly whisks it away. Less than a kilometer away, a short 400-meter-long stream appears at the surface but it cannot be traced upstream beyond that flat stretch because it descends from the Telanca Area as an underground stream. After a run of approximately 400 meters on level ground at the base of the Telanca “rise”, the stream again goes underground until it reaches sea-level at the inlet facing Peucang Island.

The point is, the geological landform derived from limestone that describes the Telanca Area weathers into silty soil so porous that there are no signs of surface water, even shortly after a rainfall. Furthermore, a sandstone shelf at the southern margin of peninsular Ujung Kulon weathers into sandy soils that are also decidedly dry in appearance. The **Footloose Forester** measured only 25% moisture content in the soil there, after 10 consecutive days of rain. Many or even most people would describe the entirety of Ujung Kulon as a rainforest, but from a soil type classification basis, some areas are physiologically drier than others.

In the steep uplands of the Volcanoes Region of El Salvador, the porous silty soils there are derived from volcanic ash, and the soil moisture regime is decidedly dry, regardless of the rainfall in the immediate surroundings. Occasional ground fires that occur there are exacerbated by the relative dryness of the soil surface as rainwater quickly percolates into the soil profile. Some people might think of the thick forest there as rainforest, but the dynamics of water transport into and through the soil profile give such silty soils some characteristics that are unlike the putative clay soils further down the valley. Soil cartographers can and do map the boundaries of such soil bodies in an effort to understand the nuances regarding the physiography of forests and agricultural lands.

The whole concept about what is and what is not a rainforest has never been conclusively defined. Although there are a number of studies that suggest that high annual rainfall with relatively uniform distribution throughout the year is the hallmark of a rainforest, a minimum measure of rainfall is perhaps the best indicator to distinguish a moist forest from a wet forest, and a wet forest from a true rainforest. Alas, several studies, when viewed as a review of rainforest characteristics, imply that rainforest can occur with as little as 2500 mm of annual precipitation. One of the more convincing schools of thought sets a minimum of 5000 mm annual rainfall as the lower limit, when located in a tropical latitude. By that measure, there are very few places on earth where true rainforest occurs. To the general public, the specifics of rainforest characteristics will continue to be ill-defined, hence our understanding of the ecology and dynamics of forest ecosystems will wander without the hint of elucidation until someone attempts to put the issue into a reasonable context. The subject is definitely worthy of a major research venture.



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Deforestation, Reforestation, and Afforestation

The continuous evolution of digital technology across written, audio, and pictorial media has resulted in each medium of expression having an ever-improving capability to create and to share our personal expressions of gratification. That is to say, if we wish to share things, we have by virtue of video, camera, tape recordings, and written text, the ability to create live-action films, pictorial mementos, the sweet sounds of music, and the voices of our loved ones. We can re-create endearing words of our own heartfelt feelings; and these days we have the tools to do it ourselves.

Video of animated, active children tells us a story, whether or not we know or understand the story we see on film. Still photos also tell us a story, although the animation and action may be missing. Tape recordings contain the sounds of the action and the dialogue of those who are the subject of the recordings. And written text communicates the personal views of the person writing the text. When you put them all together, all of the media enable us to communicate with others in ways that are more sophisticated than we perhaps realize.

If the main purposes of communication are: **To Instruct...To Inform...To Entertain**, then each medium of the modern forms of communication are sharp tools created to do our bidding. Perhaps the oldest medium and the most ubiquitous tool is the written word. It is also the most versatile in many ways because modern word processing technology allows practitioners to blend in photos and videos into communiques with others. In addition, the written word allows the writer to explain the content of videos and photos that may not be apparent to others. Internal editors within computer programs also allow for additions and edits to the text, to further explain or clarify the text. In the case of recordings, the written text allows the writer to interpret the words and the sounds on the recording, if that is necessary.

As a forester, the subject of good forest and land management has always been the compass by which I am guided. To the layman who only observes the state of affairs of environmental circumstances by a cursory or passing viewing of snapshots or short documentary videos, an underlying analysis or the pros and cons of land management may never rise to the level of contemplation beyond what is offered in the photos or videos, themselves. That is the bailiwick of the professional land manager. But without transmitting a clear understanding of what is good management, what is bad management, and what proposed improvements might look like, land managers are constrained in their ability to secure the financial and administrative support needed to maximize their effectiveness. All too often, that support is tied directly or indirectly to political

encouragement and backing at the local, state and national levels. When it comes to support at the national level, the needed resources are almost exclusively tied to political support, from which financial backing flows. Or not.

To a typical layman, some environmental issues pique their interest by way of verbal comments. Standalone comments, as filters through which the issues migrate upward or downward in seeming importance, do; however, weigh on where the issues land on the scale of national priorities. Land management issues may be vitally important in the scheme of national or even global priorities, but public opinion and survey polls have a way of distorting their actual significance.

Going beyond the philosophical background of forest and land management practices as intellectual precedents, the pedestrian viewpoint may always be the controlling stimulus. A few raw observations may be used as examples. **DEFORESTATION** is bad for the environment. **REFORESTATION** is good for the environment. **AFFORESTATION** is an unknown land management practice, thus does not rise to the level of significant interest in polling results. In general, most people might agree with those findings but land managers must take careful stock what is actually meant by deforestation, reforestation, and afforestation; and then tailor their approaches to minimize the negative aspects and maximize the positives. The long, involved process is not as obvious as it might seem.

For example, cutting down trees in the tropics or elsewhere does not equate to **deforestation**. It could mean selective harvesting of forest products, with a view to improving existing stands and with the goal of sustainable yields in the future.

Reforestation is generally regarded as a good thing, but there have been plenty of cases wherein the choice of species used in reforestation have proven to be unsuccessful, ill-suited to the climates or the soils where they were planted, or incompatible with the needs and/or wants of the local populations regarding their expectations. Land managers must first obtain support for reforestation efforts but then must be successful to a sufficient degree if they are ever going to attract future administrative, financial, and political support.

Private companies and landowners who own the land and pay taxes on them are inclined to replant and replenish. The old adage that if you cut a tree you should plant a tree, has been followed for decades. Statistics from some commercial forestry operations in the United States show that for every tree cut, there are 11 or more trees planted to replace them. That is an example of recycling. Recycling also applied in other countries that deal with forest management issues.

But we don't support recycling just to "save" trees. Unlike nonrenewable materials like steel and aluminum, we can always grow more trees. And we do. Last year, forest landowners planted nearly 1.7 billion seedlings and managed the natural generation of millions of other trees--creating two and half million acres of new, growing forest. Which means: In the United States, at least, for decades, we've been growing more wood than is harvested or lost to insects and disease. As a result, since the beginning of the 1980s, America's total forest base has actually increased by 27 million acres.

Anything that can be said about deforestation and modern large-scale campaigns of reforestation might also have a common link to **afforestation**. By definition, afforestation is the process of re-establishing forest and/or shrubs to land that previously contained forests and shrubs, or was never vegetated. Thus, choosing the species that meet societal needs, ideally on a sustainable basis and within the context of the present-day biological imperatives of climate, soils and population pressures are huge challenges. The factors that caused the land to become deforested in the past may be the same ones that newly afforested land may face in the future, not least of which are the demands made on the land by uncontrolled access by humans and grazing animals.

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Plant Adaptation to Global Warming

The debate about climate change is not going away anytime soon. For whatever reasons, there are plenty of climate change deniers holding firm in their beliefs. Some offer mild objections because they can and do cite temperature anomalies. Others, especially those who have vested commercial interests in maintaining the pretense that the climate is not changing, at least not changing beyond the historical boundaries of natural climate fluctuations, hope that opinion continues to trump facts. Some corporations and fossil-fuel industries put considerable effort into protecting the status quo as regards how we as a world society deal with perceived climate changes. And when elected leaders who have broad access to the bully pulpit come right out and declare that global warming is a hoax, they carry many of their loyal supporters with them. Unquestioning supporters may think that if the President of the United States declares that global warming is a hoax that was invented by the Chinese to weaken the American economy by encouraging us in a fruitless effort to do something about it, that makes future planning and mitigation efforts more difficult.

This chronicle chooses to address the climate issue as one of global warming, rather than one of climate change. During the truncated evolution of the debate about climate, the trend line in temperature change has been one of warming. Although the term “global warming” is not as readily accepted among reluctant observers who might otherwise and begrudgingly acknowledge the fact of climate change, the trend lines on graphs show a pattern of warming for the past 200 years or so. We are talking about changes over time and on a worldwide basis, not about the ups and down in daily and local weather patterns. Nevertheless, there will always be people who rely on their opinions as somehow superseding the recorded facts. For too long, the myth that opinion trumps facts has prevailed. Another myth that perception is everything is also false, but is sometimes overpowering.

Climate changes have, however; altered the institutional recommendations of many scientists who study the adaptations of both plants and animals with regard to their preferred habitats. Perhaps the oldest tracking system in popular use refers to the cold hardiness maps issued by the USDA in 1960 and periodically updated. An update is currently being prepared and will show a 2018 publication date.



2012 version of plant hardiness zone map

Another standard reference map, one by the non-profit, non-political Arbor Day Foundation, also dates back decades and has been updated in response to climate change. Their interest for the past 50+ years has been to inform gardeners and horticulturists about the hardiness of plants within the arbitrary boundaries of temperature regimes in the continental United States. By definition, **hardiness of plants describes their ability to survive adverse growing conditions. It is usually limited to discussions of climatic adversity. Thus, a plant's ability to tolerate cold, heat, drought, flooding, or wind are typically considered measurements of hardiness.** Hardiness of plants is defined by their native extent's geographic location: longitude, latitude, and elevation. Inasmuch as there are real differences in annual temperature regimes throughout the United States, the meteorological and climatological sciences have long ago categorized the climates themselves and ascribed approximate boundary lines on maps to help orient us.

For many horticulturists, the Arbor Day Foundation map of cold hardiness zones in the continental United States is a standard reference. Although its publication date is 2002, there were previous hardiness zone maps using the same criteria and also published by the Arbor Day Foundation. Changes in the maps from 1990 to present day circumstances put geospatial and interactive markers on changes in the boundaries themselves.



The map above is popular because it is easy to understand. There have also been updates over time to show changes in hardiness zones as a result of global warming.

In 2002 the USDA initiated a project with the American Horticultural Society to update the 1990 map. A year later the AHS released a draft of the update which showed that many of the hardiness zones had moved northward reflecting a general warming trend. The USDA, after a brief review, decided to reject the draft and

gave little justification for its decision. Its terse dismissal raised the possibility that it was a political decision - the USDA was concerned that the AHS Draft gave support to global warming proponents and decided to suppress the project to avoid controversy and not embarrass the Bush Administration. Ten years later the USDA released the 2012 Hardiness Zone Map which added two new climate zones and showed a general warming trend across the country. The USDA, however, noted that, "Changes in zones are not reliable evidence of whether there has been global warming." It seems obvious that the issue of climate change became a political football that has been tossed around ever since.

Whether the casual reader is a climate change denier or a believer in climate changes that are trending more specifically toward an ever-warming planet, we as a society should at least recognize that there is a considerable body of scientific knowledge that should inform our opinions. Using recommended plant hardiness zone maps facilitates our judgement calls when it comes to choosing which plants are best adapted to various latitudes and elevation.

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The Scientific Method In Everyday Life

There may be a lot of truth in the idea that we all forget about 80% of what we learned in school. Most of us, however; are satisfied that what we have retained continues to serve us in daily life and in very useful ways. Knowing how to count and apply simple math is so fundamental that we may not appreciate how vexing life would be if we didn't learn those basic skills and use them regularly. Imagine how helpless we would feel if we just plain forgot how to count and how to assess groupings that demand numerical values as descriptors.



In your opinion, are there more than a thousand sheep? Less than a thousand? To whom does it matter?

There are other things in daily life that cry out for description in terms that are definitive enough to require ranges that delimit the choices of what is possible, what is plausible, and what is actual. The gradations from possible, plausible, and actual; however, are not so obvious. By using a systematic approach to evaluation, it helps us to identify boundaries between what is vaguely possible, up through somewhat plausible, and finally settling on what is actually and factually the case. Such is one aspect of a primer description of the scientific method.

You don't have to be a scientist to know about and use the scientific method, but you have to have a scientist's insistence on acknowledging the evidence that you see and then to put a putative value on what you have seen. In the scientific method, you simply cannot ignore the facts and blindly choose to embrace an opinion about what you have seen as the basis of your judgment about an issue.

In the scientific method, one of the fundamental precepts and requirement is the hypothesis. When we look at a situation that we wish to understand, the first step is to state a hypothesis about what we presume about that situation. For example, we might observe a withered tree that shows no signs of life and form the hypothesis that the tree is dead. A counter-hypothesis (a null hypothesis) would state, despite the superficial visual evidence, the tree is not dead. In the scientific method, one gathers the evidence and proceeds to test the null hypothesis about the tree not being dead. If there are any signs of life, the observer must conclude that the null hypothesis is valid and that the tree is not dead.

If a friend poses for a photo before the stark corpse of bleached and broken branches and the naked trunk of the Bristlecone pine tree (*Pinus arisita*) known as the Methuselah Tree, high in the White Mountains of California, most people would assume that it was dead. That withered skeleton of dried out wood still shows some signs of life, even two thousand years after it began growing there. Hence, the name the Methuselah Tree, given for the evidence of a few green needles located along one or two strands of its gnarled branches.



The Methuselah Tree is over 2,000 years old

To that extent, using the scientific method to uphold the null hypothesis is more problematical because it requires an explanation and elucidation of the evidence. In the eyes of those who would choose the hypothesis that the tree is dead merely because there are no obvious signs of life, the explanation is usually stated, and usually without justifiable proof. Furthermore, it is far easier to pronounce your opinion and gets others to accept it if you convince them that the tree shows no signs of life, so it must be dead. Indeed, visual evidence may be compelling, but we should be aware that not all evidence should be judged as valid. Just because a seemingly dead tree has been witnessed by thousands of people, does not mean that it is dead. In everyday science, even the evidence should be challenged.

If solid and verifiable evidence proves that the tree is not dead, any person using the scientific method properly should stand against what passes as popular opinion.

There is perhaps nothing more contentious in the everyday life of adults who are discussing politics than persistent, opposing viewpoints. Most of those views are based on opinions and not on actual facts. Final decisions regarding a candidate or political policies may weigh heavily on personal opinions, but there are real facts that should go along with those opinions. Alas, in the case of discussing politics, opinions always seem to trump facts—every time.

One memorable and enduring cliché that stands out as it relates to politics or anything else subject to debate: “*you are welcome to your own opinions, but not to your own facts.*” Facts should stand alone and stand apart. The soundness of that wisdom, on the other hand, never seems to survive very long in a discussion about politics, as the prime example. We should include facts in our decision-making process, but by the millions, voters overlook the scientific method and choose to make their decisions most often based on unsupported opinions.

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Maybe I Didn't Make Myself Clear

As the months and years fly by, some of us think back to those times when we were in heated discussion about things that are important. Sometimes the topics were important only to us, but at other times the topics were important to others, many others. At such times it seems obvious that speaking up for what we believe is important enough to risk hurt feelings and predictable condemnation from some organized groups. It is easy to stand silently in a crowd, but it takes courage to speak out in a hostile environment. But as they say in the often-filmed scenes of contested marriages, "speak now or forever hold your peace."

As we all know, the vast majority of times, even in scripted and sugar-coated productions made by film companies, the protagonists do not speak up. In the make-believe world of Hollywood movies and films made for TV audiences, there are no consequences that last after the buttered popcorn is consumed, or the TV show comes to the end of its allotted time slot. In the real world where brothers and sisters are engaged in conversations about family matters that do matter, it is vitally important to speak up when circumstances demand it. That also applies to the world of politics where the elections and the outcomes affect all of us. Better to speak out before the elections than to suffer years of buyer's remorse.

Alas, in family matters most people do not always say exactly what they want to convey, in the way they want the message to be understood. It does not matter if the speaker or speakers are skilled orators or not, highly educated or not...the subject matter is adorned with its own set of values and truths, waiting only to be discovered for what they really are. If those intrinsic values and implied truths are not elaborated by those wishing to expose them, maybe we are witnessing a case of the respondents not making themselves clear.

The same principles apply to political elections, starting before the elections themselves; but continuing well beyond that time when elected office holders take up office space. Protagonists as candidates may be more articulate, but the voters also have a stake in the outcomes, thus should be clear about what values they truly embrace and are willing to support.

The timid, the inarticulate, and the cowed may give up early in their quest to state their case in a way that might gain support, in a family discussion or in a political election. On the other hand, the extroverted, the glib, and self-serving candidates who have attracted our attention may hold sway even if their arguments and points of view do not conform to the true nature of the circumstances. Sadly, we as individuals are always

at the mercy of those who are clever enough to spin facts to their advantage. As long as they win, they are not at all remorseful about their methods, they are also not likely to conduct a self-examination of their own arguments--if they work, even if they really don't believe in them.

On the other hand, those who find themselves disenfranchised may wish that they had presented other, complementary points of view. In other words, the losers in family debates, grand or insignificant, may wish that they persisted with a willingness to proclaim, "Maybe I didn't make myself clear." That willingness to extend the discussion or fully debate the issues sends a clear signal that maybe, just maybe, my case is stronger than you know; maybe my argument is deeper than you give it credit for; maybe you are not going to get a win without a fight. As regards the emotions of the winners and the losers in political elections, we are all saddled with the results and subsequent policies of the election victors, whether we agree with them or not. That is not to say that we should just wilt and fade away. Some of us on the losing side are willing to resist what we perceive as unacceptable circumstances and questionable procedures. Some of us are willing to declare that we are willing to, as Dylan Thomas once said, "... *rage, rage, against the dying of the light.*"



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Stand Your Grounds

(Opinions Count, But Facts Matter)

It was an innocent remark. Our house guest suggested that our morning coffee was too strong because we used too many scoops of coffee grounds. We like strong coffee and have been using the same basic formula for a number of years; one scoop or a little less for each cup of coffee desired. True, some visitors remarked that our coffee was strong, and they knew enough to add plain water to dilute theirs, so we did not see that as a compelling reason to change our method.

His opinion about the coffee being strong related to his personal taste but his statement about us adding too many scoops called for verification. What turned out to be a simple experiment was conducted to demonstrate the actual volume of coffee grounds used, based on the recommendations of others and compared to our own.

To begin, the **Footloose Forester** looked on the label of two different coffee brands that we had in the kitchen. Both Maxwell House and Folgers had printed instructions for preparing a single cup of coffee—one Tablespoon of grounds for each typical cup of 6 ounces. Next the **Footloose Forester** prepared the demonstration by selecting a shallow bowl. He added a single Tablespoon of coffee grounds to the empty plastic coffee scoop we have been using for years. A heaping Tablespoon of grounds was more than double the amount that would fit into our plastic scoop. After discarding the dry grounds back into its original container, he repeated the exercise using a level Tablespoon. It was still about double the capacity of our favored scoop. Then he chose a teaspoon to measure out one scoop. Even the smaller teaspoon of grounds exceeded the volume capacity of our plastic scoop. Alas, there is neither a standard Tablespoon nor a standard teaspoon in our drawer. What may look like a Tablespoon doesn't always contain the standard measure of a Tablespoon. The same goes for a teaspoon--they come in slightly different sizes, so have slightly different measures. Likewise, coffee scoops come in different sizes.

Another problem with assuming that written instructions are reasonable has to do with the glass carafe that collects the percolated coffee in our coffee maker. The numbers etched into the side of the carafe do not refer to the actual number of cups percolated. Each successive volume marking from 2-12 does not mean cups, partly because there is no standard size for coffee cups. If a person measures out the water in a 6 ounce cup, you discover that a little more than 5 cups fills our carafe up to the number 12 marking.

Thus, plain water added to the #12 marking makes 5-6 cups of coffee, regardless of strength. Anyone of the opinion that the manufacturer meant that it suggests the number of cups brewed should think again.

We had the opportunity to compare volume measurements with another coffee maker and its carafe, at the apartment of our in-laws. The small Faberware coffee maker with the carafe marked as 4 cups used one 16.9 ounce plastic bottle of water, to the exact level. Since the water at the correct level may have yielded 4 cups, each cup was calculated at 4.22 ounces each.

The lesson in this chronicle is about deciding between the opinions of guests versus the facts that could be demonstrated. In the opinion of our house guest, our coffee is too strong because we use too many scoops of coffee grounds. Indeed, our coffee is strong but it is not due to using too many scoops. If we used the recommended amount of one Tablespoon, according to the information given on the Folgers or Maxwell House labels, the coffee might be twice as strong. And having 6 cups of fresh coffee means filling up the carafe beyond the #12 mark.

To be as accurate as possible, anyone who wants to get reproducible volumes of either coffee grounds or water for the coffee maker should measure the desired amount with a liquid, say a juice. No heaping Tablespoons or teaspoons when you use orange juice, no guessing about the volumes of teacups or jumbo coffee mugs.



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Mantras That Endure

Of the many would-be chronicles that have struggled toward a birth on paper, this one about spiritual attachment to mantras has kicked and squirmed its way, finally, to a nascent birth. The personal mantras of the **Footloose Forester** have not been overly abundant and seldom created with the belief that each one was instrumental in calming the waters of inner turmoil, but he has learned that as a tool to achieve focus on a hoped-for mental accommodation about one subject or another, summoning up an appropriate mantra hastens the thought process. Mantras are not so mysterious that they are solely the domain of mystics and gurus. We summons them in many circumstances.

When we try to thread a needle, we tell ourselves to focus. When trying to understand a discussion about a technical matter we find ourselves paying closer attention than if the subject matter were about washing our hands with soap. A mantra beckoning us to concentrate is implicit, if not always accompanied by spoken words of instruction.

The mere exercise in coming up with an appropriate mantra presumes that we found it desirable to have a handy tool at our disposal, to address an issue that requires mental focus or to force us to associate our thoughts with some other pre-determined subject matter. The Manchurian Candidate, a movie about brain-washing and mind control, is a classic because it introduced a dramatic example of reactionary gestures in a group of men triggered by a few but very selective spoken words. In that case, the mantra was the trigger to commit some egregious act that was involuntary. And the chosen mantra was seared into the brains of every prisoner of war that was chosen for indoctrination in the mind-control sessions.

Choosing a mantra for yourself is perhaps a yuppy thing to do in some Aquarian circles these days, but the **Footloose Forester** has had enough positive feedback over the years in communing through his own chosen mantras to be comfortable in keeping them, literally, in mind. The word “**sunrise**” was one chosen specifically to elicit a mental tableau of serenity and the beauty of a tropical dawn in Indonesia. “**Jack’s Peak**” was another cue to direct his thoughts immediately to the silent beauty of a remote mountain top in the Desolation Valley Wilderness Area of the El Dorado Forest in California. That place so haunts him that he wishes his ashes to be scattered nearby. And the phrase “**Domine delexi decorem tuae**” is a response that often comes when he is suddenly enraptured with the beautify of nature around him. That is a mantra that he does not invoke, it is a mantra auto-evoked and stimulated from his surroundings. On the occasion of a near-death mountain-climbing

experience in Germany in 1963, he joyfully celebrated the privilege of being there in splendid sunshine by invoking those words, **Domine delexi decorem tuae, et locum habitationis gloria tuae**. Lord, I love the beauty of your house and the place where your glory dwells. Yes, his mantras are spiritual.

One other scenario has a mantra associated with it. For reasons he cannot explain well, during the communion service at Mass, each time the priest elevates the large white host, **Footloose Forester** repeats the mantra word "**Muzaffarabad**" a reference to a very plain dining area in a modest hotel in Pakistan. As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Pakistan in the early 1960s, we stayed there on our way to our forest research sites in the Hindu Kush. The seldom-used dining room had a bare, unpainted and rough wooden table that took up almost the whole width of the room. In his mind, it might have had the same crude construction as the table at the Last Supper of Jesus; and inasmuch as the consecration of the Eucharist at Mass is a re-enactment of that last supper, the **Footloose Forester** thinks of that crude wooden table and says **Muzaffarabad**. An ingrained scenario and a triggered mantra and, conversely, a mantra and a long-remembered scenario.

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By Dick Pellek

Going Inside An Egyptian Pyramid Wasn't On the Bucket List

Ancient history meant too many things about too many places when Footloose Forester was a child. He only knew that it was complicated and that people who studied such things didn't know the complete story. So it was always on the mind of the **Footloose Forester** to somehow go to Egypt... and to Romeand to Greece..., as a minimum in getting a first-hand look, as things on his bucket list. Little by little, those quests were satisfied. First was Rome by car in the 1960s; then to Egypt and Greece by way of stopovers along planned vacation routes in the 1990s. History is still mysterious, but the memories of colossal edifices made believing in history most vivid and satisfying.

The first sight of Egypt was from about 8000 feet above the Nile River. Any higher and the Nile River delta was obscured by dust particles blowing off the Sahara Desert. Lower down, the ribbon of green agricultural fields adjacent to the Nile contrasted vividly. Where the irrigation systems faded out (about two miles wide on either side of the Nile), the ochre sameness of the Sahara consumed everything else.

Footloose Forester had wanted to climb a pyramid but thought that the chances of doing so were going to be slim. He settled for going deep into the center of a minor pyramid near Memphis. You can see it clearly by zooming in with a Google Earth photo at N 29° 47' 24.23" and E 31° 12' 34.82". The great pyramids of Giza are about 20 miles away; and although **Footloose Forester** had those in mind, as well, he settled for walking entirely around the largest pyramid of Cheops. The perimeter around its square-dimensioned base was over 1300 feet on a side, making it the largest building in the world at the time it was built; and it is still among the largest buildings in the world!

Lately, he has been following clues in a National Geographic special on the "lost pyramid of Egypt" about one of the obscure pyramids, some miles to the north. It is heavily hyped in the TV documentary but makes for first-rate TV, nonetheless. The site of the pyramid (or sun temple, as has been suggested) is easy enough to find on the Google maps. It does take some work and a fair amount of interpretation, but that is the essence of map work. Always was, always will be. Google Earth makes it infinitely easier to conceptualize.

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Holiday at Cam Ranh Bay

It wasn't often that the **Footloose Forester** chose to pick up his suitcase and walk from the air terminal to his destination, especially when he was in Viet Nam during the height of a war. But it was early enough in the afternoon, the sun was shining, and his destination was the PA&E worksite and office was only a couple of miles away. Besides, they didn't have civilian taxis at the sprawling Cam Ranh Air Base and nobody at the worksite knew that he was coming. He felt safe at Cam Ranh like no other place because it was practically colonized by US military forces, the US Air Force at the northern end of the peninsula, the US Navy at the southern end and the first battalion or so of US Army troops that were just beginning to build their cantonment in the middle.

Just before he was to turn from the coastal road toward the hill that led up to the back of a huge old sand dune where PA&E chose to locate their facilities, along comes a jeep with three sailors in it. Truth is stranger than fiction... the driver was a young Navy Lieutenant(j.g.) who might have passed for Mr. Roberts, according to his blasé attitude. He was driving because he wanted to. He was the one who asked the **Footloose Forester** where he was going, suitcase in hand. When the answer was just beyond the approaching sand dune, the Lieutenant interjected with a proposition. "How about you come and join us for a barbeque at our hooch, and we will drop you off later on?" "We have steaks, an outdoor grill, and cold beer, so come and join us."

That sunny day was memorable because the jolly Lieutenant and his guys did have their grill ready to be fired up just as soon as he gunned the jeep up the sandy tract that led to their command headquarters. It was only one hooch, but his unit was a detachment operation whose main headquarters was somewhere else. For them, it was like a holiday getting away from their other place, wherever that was. The **Footloose Forester** didn't ask questions. But true to his word, his boys broke out the beer, fired up the grill and started with the steaks. And they were all in a good mood, as we drank beer and gazed out from the top of their sand dune toward the center of Cam Ranh Bay. He doesn't remember much about the steak except to note it was a T-bone. Of course, one of the sailors drove him back to PA&E, behind the other sand dune before the sun set.

There were lots of other memories about Cam Ranh because it was the largest project that **Footloose Forester** had in his portfolio and before he left the country he had visited there on work assignments 26 times. One other incident that sticks in his memory is taking an hour or so during an outgoing flight delay to walk to the opposite side of the twin 13,500-foot runways at the Air Force Base and watch as F-5 fighter bombers took off and landed, side by side.

Taking off, wing-tip to wing-tip, does not constitute a logistical problem, one peeling off to the right and the other peeling off to the left. But landing, more or less wing-tip to wing-tip at the same time takes in-flight coordination that was not expected in a war zone. After witnessing 3-4 sorties of such formation flying, the **Footloose Forester** was convinced that the demonstration of synchronized landings was part of their flight plans.

Over the years, the modest naval port at Cam Ranh has witnessed occupation by Japanese, French, American and Russian troops and their ships. It is anybody's guess how much and how long it took for the Vietnamese to regain their sovereignty.

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But Don't Take My Word For It

Trolling the waters of Internet social sites leads to the realization that among the millions of people who choose to respond with comments, there are the cautious ones, the reckless ones, the thoughtful ones, and the intemperate ones. Their comments, especially among sites that invite political commentary, are often short, punchy, on point, and clever. Or not. However, if ever the politicians wish to better understand what **We The People** think, they can learn a great deal from reading selective comments and hopefully learn from them. That is not to say that everything posted on line by common citizens constitutes inspired wisdom. Much of the commentary can readily and justifiably be culled. Be especially careful of the trolls and the political hackers who purposefully deceive us. But don't take my word for it. Nonetheless, the Internet is truly a place where everyone can learn, even if the posted content is largely opinion. **We The People** are, after all, a multicultural society composed of people who are cautious, reckless, thoughtful, and intemperate. Among other things. Not to mention well educated, or moderately educated, or poorly educated. Everyone has an opinion and deserves to be heard. Not all opinions, however, carry equal weight. We alone decide on their merits, and that brings us back full-circle to our current state of world affairs.

Should opinions trump facts? In politics, at least, it seems that well-crafted and heavily marketed opinions hold sway most of the time. Verifiable facts are essential as proof of the pudding, so to speak, but in the final analysis the acceptability of the pudding itself is a matter of taste, and taste is subjective.

This chronicle is also about opinions and thus is subjective in many regards. But it also highlights empirical facts that can readily be acknowledged even while being debated. Whereas science prides itself as being fact-based and objective at its core, there is plenty of room for subjective discourse. As perhaps the best example in these contemporary times of scientific debate, the issue of climate change is not only on the front burner, but the status of the debate itself impacts how society reacts to and makes adjustments to climate change. But don't take my word for it. Analyze the circumstances for yourself.

The environment is another issue that comprises both objectivity and subjectivity within the parameters of a putative debate. Objectively, nobody will deny that we live in a world that nurtures us in an inherited environment that has allowed us to exist and to thrive. As the world population has expanded and transformed the very landscapes on which we reside, it is undeniable that we humans have altered our environments.

One may presume that the word “environment” should be considered in a general way, but when we look closely it becomes evident that there are many subdivisions of the grand domain we casually refer to as the environment. There is the air, there is water, there is land; furthermore, there is dry land, wet land, flat land, mountainous land, and frozen land. By the hand of man, we have altered our environments, both the seas and the land. We have become the stewards of the land and of the seas but over thousands of years we have altered the many environments that we have inherited, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse.

Just recently, one trending media site posed a question to anyone who was willing to provide an answer. The unadorned Question-and-Answer site named Quora asked, “How are humans being influenced by environmental factors?” A simple, straightforward question...too simple because there are many answers.

We are being influenced by the passive environments we inherited, and we are being influenced by the environments we have altered. Where to start? Do we start with the passive and ambient factors in our air? There are background levels of pollution from decomposing vegetation and emissions from volcanoes, methane releases from melting permafrost, from dust storms, etc. Or do we start with the factors of our altered air quality and temperature control through air conditioning, ventilation system filtration and artificial shading?

Water as part of our inherited environments is no less a consideration when describing the complexity of our earthly resources. Sea water, lake water, river water, rain water, and ground water are all different entities with respect to their loci of occurrence, available volumes, and their chemical compositions—despite the similar physical appearance. How we steward one of our most precious resources is vitally important if for no other reason than the fact that humans can and do regularly pollute and poison our waters on a grand scale. It does not require special equipment or training. All it takes is carelessness and inattention.

Land is the one natural resource that humans understand the best because we all have, without exception, a life-long exposure and personal knowledge of one kind of land or another. A land environment is no less complex, however, due to the combined variables such as annual temperature regimes, precipitation, native vegetation, topography, geologic features and the underlying minerals that so feverishly drive us to deface our landscapes. But don’t take my word for it. Survey the land for yourself.

Despite the wealth of its resources on the surface and under the surface of our land environments that have allowed us to prosper by developing our lands, much of earth’s land surface is remote, vacant, inaccessible, or prohibitively expensive to develop. But don’t take my word for it. Others have come to the same conclusion.

So, how have humans been influenced by environmental factors? We alter them, or try to do so. Within reason, that is not a bad policy. If we did not fight against naturally occurring disease, we would not live as long as we do. If we did not raise the air temperature in our homes during the winter, we would be very cold for extended periods. If we did not cool the air in the summer, there would be widespread discomfort. If we did not take pains to ensure that we are drinking clean water, the water that we inherited as part of our total environment would definitely influence our health. If we did not study and understand genetics, there would be no new fruit or flower varieties, no resistance to the basest of environmental constraints that regulate growth and development. There would be no transplantation of species into other climatic regimes, no adaptations of man or animal to climate changes. But don’t take my word for it.

Humans are the creatures with the cleverest brains. We are born into this world that is structured with a variety of environmental factors and biological imperatives. At their core, the environmental factors cannot be erased, but they can be altered. Likewise, biological imperatives concerning life functions cannot be erased, but they also can be ameliorated to permit us to grow and thrive. ***We The People*** have to learn about what can and should be adapted, and what should not. But don't take my word for it.

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Ultimate MEMCOM

When I review the number of friends or subscribers that traffic counters on social media sites tell me that I have, it is a bit dismaying to think that my sphere of influence is pitifully small. On the largest social media site in the world (*Facebook*) my homepage traffic counter says that I have a little over a hundred friends. On the site where I sometimes post and share technical interest stories, the counter reports that I have 95 regular reviewers. That same site (*LinkedIn*) inconsistently counts the number of clicks made when reviewers presumably read selected stories. Collectively, the number of clicks on my stories and posts exceeds the number of subscribers to my LinkedIn homepage, thus suggesting that lurkers are far more numerous than purported friends and/or subscribers to that homepage. Lurkers, of course, are those visitors who come to look and perhaps to read but may not add content themselves before moving on to other sites.

At one extreme is the pitifully small number of subscribers at my Blogpost media site (less than four) despite the fact that the site itself is an alternative receptacle for virtually all of the stories I have posted over the years. That site does not tally the number of clicks on individual stories. It also does not matter. Lurkers can read what they are interested in; and that is exactly what I, as author, hope they do. Sharing my postings with others has always been the one and only objective and it does not matter whether lurkers and regular readers like my posts or not.

At another major social media site (*LegacyStories.org*), the one I chose to be the main archive of my blog posts, the registered number of my friends and subscribers I count (all of 7 people) does not accurately reflect the importance of the site as a repository for thousands of hits on the stories found there. No need to feel unrecognized or inconsequential because I have only 7 friends. The lurkers who come and go without registering or making comment have been exposed to content of various kinds; and have marked the occasion of their visits by the collective tally of 342,000 hits on my stories. The issue is not about me, it is about the effectiveness of social media sites and their role in contemporary communications.

Having various social media sites where a person can share information is a valuable tool in the overall process of communications. If others believe, as I do, that the purposes of communications are: To Instruct...To Inform... and To Entertain, then being a participant and a subscriber to various social media sites holds out the possibility of being influential as a player in real-time circumstances. Two-way dialogue is not only possible,

it actually works. Active real-time dialogue has come into its own as a way to communicate and likely will become even more important as a feedback mechanism regarding issues great and small.

The author who would hope to instruct by way of posting to social media also opens the lines of communication with readers who might have questions that they would like answered. Just like a telephone conversation between parties across town or across the globe, a computer-based social media site is the conduit system. Correspondents who wish to dialogue can do so. The authors whose purpose is merely to inform others can reach a worldwide audience in a matter of seconds. Responses to posts might be in the mix, but not always relevant nor expected. Regular readers and occasional lurkers presumably obtain what they came for. Those who share stories to entertain may or may not have a single purpose. The one-way free exchange of their ideas might seem to be a passive approach but when the ideas shared are controversial in nature, there may be blowback in the offing. And there should be, if ever the author and the correspondents in the dialogue expect to learn anything from the feedback.

There is seldom a single motive for communicating on social media websites, with or without feedback dialogue. Some of the bolder authors of political commentary, especially those who craft editorials and essays are more likely to have a host of reasons to initiate and foster dialogue. Writers and freelancers, for example, may have a strategic agenda pertaining to establishing their credentials. Some of them may be promoting their wares, perhaps to hasten the sale of books. In that case, a typical response to an inquiry might be, for example, “buy my book and you will see what I’m talking about in Chapter 3.”

On a strictly personal level, the serial Chronicles of a **Footloose Forester** have become the ultimate MEMCOM (Memorandum of Communication) archetype of the guy who took field notes when working in the woods and kept his 22 notebooks handy for reference. Along the way, he decided to share some of the stories about exotic locations through social media and in doing so, promote the idea that two-way communication also serves the purposes: To Instruct...To Inform...To Entertain.

The act of communicating well cannot be underestimated. Too much discord in our collective histories can be traced back to ill-conceived, incomplete or misconstrued thoughts, words and actions that were never properly communicated. We all can do better and we should.

It is never possible to recall everything with complete clarity but keeping notes helps to sharpen the focus. In back-and-forth verbal exchanges it is expected that subsequent telling may change the tone, if not the context. When a point of view is derived from a written account, there is virtually no wiggle room. The re-telling requires absolute intellectual honesty, even if the written account is not accurate. That is to say, the written version might be interpreted in various ways, but the words themselves cannot be altered, manipulated or disguised to mean anything except what is there. Hence, the power and the substance of the MEMCOM holds a great deal of credibility. When the date and place are part of a good MEMCOM, defending an argument becomes easier.

Nobody underestimates the importance of having written records more than our so-called president. He seems so sure of himself and his ability to talk his way out of any situation, that he eschews his own team of note takers and translators in favor of just about anyone on the other side. If he won’t subscribe to having documented records of his own, historians will be forced to present their collective interpretations of what they think happened. The following thoughts were contributed by a contemporary thinker. The notes were excised and pasted below as:

Although this White House leaks like a sieve, it is shaping up to be a White House short on good records of high-level meetings, unless Trump actually does have tapes as he suggested and then denied, regarding his conversations with former FBI director James B. Comey. That's too bad for historians of the future trying to make sense of this presidency, and particularly the Trump-Putin relationship.

James Goldgeier is dean of the School of International Service at American University.

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Planting Trees by the Numbers

Most adults have planted a tree or two and gained satisfaction from having done so. Perhaps they also mused about how tall it would become and if the fruit would ripen for them to enjoy. Those kinds of thoughts go into the process even if the results do not literally come to fruition. The **Footloose Forester** has had the privilege of planting more than a few trees over the years but has seen very few of them grow to maturity. Reverie about a lifetime of tree planting is based on his faith in the process.

A ceremonial planting of a tree to mark the opening of an office building or the dedication of a new wing in a hospital are common enough to be expected at dedication events around the world. The few memories of the **Footloose Forester** along those lines are becoming dimmer nowadays but when one or two pop up in his brain, a stirring of excitement is also born. As usual in flights of fancy about his gadabout past, there is no relevant or meaningful chronology associated with the daydreams. They just develop as random discoveries. Random, but real.

There was that honored planting of a Dalbergia sisso at the West Pakistan Forest School in the early 1960s, and an organized mass planting of local species near the terminal building of Nairobi International Airport (**Footloose Forester** planted a few Kiglia africana seedlings); and at the dedication of a new field nursery at Kisumu in Western Kenya. At another organized planting event in conjunction with an environment conference in Togo, participants were asked to plant 50 seedlings each, and we did. **Footloose Forester** was happy to get his hands dirty planting his 50 eucalyptus trees within the large reforestation tract that covered hundreds of hectares. By now, two decades later, it should be possible to see that tract in a Google Earth scene.



Thanks to a dream-induced recollection a full day after this chronicle was published, the **Footloose Forester** wants to add a ceremonially planted tree, and to follow up on the dreamy hint that it was an Albizzia lebbek he dedicated astride the parking area of the new MDR office building at Achada São Filipe on the island of Santiago in the Republic of Cape Verde. The belief that it was an Albizzia lebbek will always be a matter of speculation because such information is seldom written down. In any case, he might have chosen an Albizzia to plant there because it was the perfect choice for its handsome full crown when mature and its overall attractiveness as a street tree, not to mention that the species is well adapted to the climate and soils of that arid region.

Some of the voluntary planting exercises that gave him the most satisfaction have precise geospatial coordinates associated with them because the recipients of the seedlings are people whose names and faces are fresh in his mind, and the planting sites are remembered with pride. A few episodes come to mind: about a dozen white dogwood trees that **Footloose Forester** transplanted from the fringes of forest near Gainesville, Florida now mark the property border of his friend Roger Blair. Then there was the transplanted Tamarindus indica that still likely provides fresh fruit on the tiny island of Pulau Peucang in Indonesia. The tall sapling came from another island where they had more than one. It was an adventure digging it up and transporting it ten miles in an open boat, then caring for it until it was time for the **Footloose Forester** to leave Indonesia. Finally, the planting of a single tree that carried its own legacy was recalled by campers who became friends when **Footloose Forester** was working on the El Dorado National Forest in California. He does not remember giving the campers a seedling at the end of the planting season, but they remember. Several years later they had a chance meeting at the campground where they first met, and Mr. and Mrs. Price told him that not only did the noble fir seedling survive, they planted it in their backyard in San Francisco. When it grew tall and stately, it became their Christmas tree that year. They even delighted him with a photograph of the tree before they cut it down.

The Bengal Tiger, otherwise known as his soulmate, earns her own kudos through tree planting. Some have been tropical exotics such as soursop, custard apple, papaya, banana, and a few others that she planted from Cape Verde to Hawaii to Viet Nam; and even into large planter pots that she nurtures inside during winter months at our home in temperate Virginia. She still anticipates spring each year and moves them outside when the weather is warm enough. Her coddled favorites include guava, clementine, dragon fruit, and jujube. The pair of healthy jujube (Zyzyphus jujuba) saplings are frost tolerant enough to survive on their own and we have enjoyed dozens of their fruits for the past few years. A single fig tree on the side of the driveway, however; is the champ when it comes to producing fruit. We gather hundreds each year, so many that drying them in a food dehydrator is the only way to conserve the fruits of the yearly harvests.

Always the experimenter, the Bengal Tiger has successfully transplanted a commercial variety of persimmon along our driveway. At one time we harvested from two different varieties of persimmon, but today only one has survived. It is also a bounteous provider and also gets the dehydrator routine. Dried persimmon strips are every bit as satisfying as the dried apples, plantains, figs, and banana strips that regularly come out of the dehydrator.

For the most part, the details about our tree planting have been memories associated with what we have experienced through hands-on planting, pruning, shaping, and harvesting. That also goes for some exotic trees that are not there anymore. One joyous prize was a solitary Rainier Cherry variety that the Bengal Tiger started from a cherry pit she saved from a bag of store-bought cherries in Pennsylvania. Only the imaginative Bengal Tiger would have deigned to grow a mature tree from a cherry pit most people would spit out. Nonetheless, the small seedling that emerged in our yard grew into a healthy sapling, then blossomed into a fruit tree that was like no other in the entire region. Rainier cherries are not grown in Western Pennsylvania but nobody told that to the Bengal Tiger. After a lapse of 3-4 years, our small family enjoyed picking cherries directly from the tree, with the aid of a step ladder. Alas, the productive years of the Rainier cherry lasted only 3 years. It began to wither and the branches began to die off, one at a time. Perhaps it was never really suited to the somewhat harsh climatic conditions of Western Pennsylvania. Never at a loss for getting the most enjoyment out of her precious plants, the Bengal Tiger allowed the artistically shaped skeleton of the cherry tree to remain in the ground for the next 5-6 years. Many a bird came to sit on its solitary side branch and its presence was like the portrait of a family member, displayed prominently in the middle of the backyard.

Tree planting for individual enjoyment is one thing, but mass scale planting is another dimension that has worldly implications. In recent decades the popular press makes light of the devastation wrought by deforestation. Most of what is reported is accurate. But the countervailing viewpoint regarding remedies usually applies to individual countries and not exposed to the popular press in the same manner. Nonetheless, most countries in the world that have a forest estate as one of its patrimonial resources, engage in conservation in one form or another. Laymen and the general public know about conservation activities in only broad terms. Even forestry professionals and specialists relate to gross numbers as a way to explain the big picture; to understand and to describe the forest domain rather than to dwell on individual trees in the forest. Hence, some broad generalizations are in order.

At a conservation conference high in the Aberdares Range of Kenya, a soft-spoken Ph.D. forest economist from Sweden rose to make a point during the proceedings. He said, that as an economist, he knows that planting trees is not a good economic investment based on projected earnings. He went on to say that Sweden, nevertheless, plants lots of trees and will continue to plant lots of trees. Other economists in Sweden, he went on, also know that tree planting does not make much sense as the best use of the land, but they also agree that Sweden should continue to plant trees. Another economist from Great Britain made a similar remark when it came to planting and managing teak plantations in Trinidad. He mentioned that there was plenty to data to show that planting the non-native *Tectona grandis*, originally imported from Burma in 1888, was an economic loser. But Trinidad today has more planted teak than any other tree species, even surpassing the most important species in the native forests. Yearly planting campaigns continue apace.

As he recalls, the **Footloose Forester** used to keep tabs on the modest tree planting programs of small countries like Burundi, Rwanda, and Togo. Finally, the Agroforestry Outreach Project during the mid-1980s in Haiti

turned out to be the largest tree planting project in the history of the country. It was not sold that way as a project but that is what emerged as an outcome. Each year, some 6-8 million seedlings were outplanted from central nurseries into the Haitian countryside where fuelwood shortages were persistent and where previous deforestation on a national scale was excessive.

Plantation forestry, as a response to ever-increasing demand for construction timber, veneer woods, plywood, fuelwood, for the raw material for pulp and paper, and as domains for other environmental goods and services, will remain as a keystone to resource management in every country that is blessed with the proper environments to sustain forests.

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Rainforests or Not?

Discussing rainforests is not the same as explaining rainforests and reporting from a rainforest is not the same as reporting about rainforests. Likewise, discussing rainforests does not and should not imply that the reporter or commentator understands rainforests. If ever there was a case to separate out the lumpers from the splitters, the subject of rainforests is a good place to start.

Without deliberately denigrating the lumpers of facts from those who analyze and split facts into ever-smaller components, there must be a place to start in even deciding which side of the divide a putative commentator on rainforests will be. Lumpers, in general, try to look at a picture and make sense of it, in a general way. Splitters look at the same picture and implicitly divine that its structure, colors, and components make it special in ways yet to be deliberated. A few rudimentary comparisons may make the point, using the mental picture of a rainforest as the case in point.

A rainforest, presumes the lumper, is composed is a forest where it rains a lot, presumably in the tropics where it is hot. That, of course, makes it a rainforest. That simplification is not an exaggerated one since the **Footloose Forester** has heard and read many variations of that very theme. One time in Haiti, he even winced after a reporter from a Philadelphia newspaper wrote an exclusive about rainforests in Haiti, where they had never existed. One of the reasons that the **Footloose Forester** calls himself a splitter is because he firmly believes that a multitude of circumstances goes into the formula about what makes a tropical rainforest. Even for a splitter, one must start with some presumptions and weave the various strands into a fabric of plausible identity.



To move from the lumpers approach to the splitter approach still requires a starting point and a few fundamentals.

Tropical + Forest = Tropical Forest. Rain + Forest = rain in a forest. Rain + Forest + Tropics = rain in a tropical forest. When the words are combined, rain in a tropical forest does not equate to a tropical rainforest. Why not?

There are qualifiers and quantifiers that delimit what should be included in the definitions. To be tropical the sole qualifier rests on a geographical location somewhere between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, those imaginary lines of latitude north and south of the earth's equator.

To be considered forest, the area in question should be composed of trees, palms, and/or bamboos whose canopies form a more or less homogeneous expanse and whose boundaries can be observed. The unique description of rainforest combines the essential ingredient of rain in a forest but with a minimum measured amount. And that is where the lumpers and the splitters part ways when it comes to description. Although this chronicle is a personal view of what a rainforest is and what it is not, the **Footloose Forester** has spent enough time researching putative rainforest characteristics to suggest some qualifiers and quantifiers. Furthermore, living in and studying tropical forests on the ground helped to embolden him to offer clarifications.

First off, a rainforest can occur anywhere there is an accepted minimum amount of annual rainfall, distributed more or less continuously throughout the year, in an ecological entity that can be recognized as forest. Heavy and uniform rainfall falling on the ocean in the tropics does not qualify, nor does similar patterns of rainfall in grasslands or cities and urban areas. Many experts put the minimum annual rainfall requirement as at least 2500 mm, or 100 inches per year. Others put the minimum at 5000 mm at a basal altitude in the tropical zone, with different minima at various altitudes. A worldwide standard has never been established, thus the debate and the confusion will persist. Most experts would agree, however, that continuous recorded monthly rainfall is a vital characteristic to distinguish total annual rainfall in putative rainforests from total rainfall derived in monsoonal climates that have months or little or no rainfall.

In 2017 RESOLVE.org published an interactive worldwide map of some 846 ecoregions showing variations in vegetation types and the color gradations that suggest that increasing or decreasing rainfall plays an important part in determining the boundaries. The organization that was founded in 1977 uses collaboration building as

an institutional tool and supports policy initiatives to advance new learning, best practices, and (land) ethics. It is perhaps the very best resource for laymen and scientists to consult regarding characteristics of various vegetation types because, in addition to a detailed map, the publication offers taxonomic descriptors that are accompanied by photographs of each of the 846 ecoregions. The reference map also has a handy legend that indicates that indeed there are rainforests in various places around the world, not all of them are in the tropics and not all of them are recognized as non-descript rainforests. There are lowland rainforests, montane rainforests, coastal rainforests, and one monsoonal rainforest. Qualifiers...and quantifiers went into the decisions to distinguish one from another.

Lumping rainy places in the tropics into a few classification categories does not tell the story of the complexity of the biotic communities on the ground that cries out for a more comprehensive set of qualifiers that can only be established by recognizing sub-sets of parameters that distinguish one from another. The discussions about rainforests may go on, but the RESOLVE map of worldwide vegetation should be considered a standard reference.

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

The Cheetah at the Waterhole

As time passes, so also do some of the details of even favorite adventures. The great fun trip to the Laikipia Plateau of Kenya in 1991 was one of them, and last night's chat with old friend and African hand Andre DeGeorges eventually got around to the time when we camped out at a waterhole at the 30,000-acre ranch of Jasper Evans. When we showed up at his ranch in the warmth of early spring on that safari so long ago, Jasper suggested that we would have a comfortable campsite if we went back down the road a mile or so and made camp near the waterhole in the woods. It was completely surrounded by trees and would be private and quiet.

Andre put his Toyota 4 X 4 into gear and reversed course along the dirt road in the direction of Nairobi, more than a hundred miles away. We turned in when we saw the trace of the only trail leading into the woods. After several hundred yards we came across the waterhole, just like Jasper Evans described it. A cheetah was basking in the sun on a grassy rise just above the waterhole. He abruptly got up and slinked off through the woods. We were delighted to see him, but we were also pleased that we could park our SUV on dry, flat ground overlooking the waterhole, a real convenience in an otherwise parched landscape. Since we had to prepare our evening meal and bed down for the night, we didn't give any further thought to the cheetah we had disturbed.

After spending the night at our campsite above the waterhole, we talked it over and decided that we should move our camp to another flat site about a hundred yards or so below the waterhole, so that the cheetah and other animals that visited the waterhole on a regular basis would not be fearful of coming in to drink. The hoof marks and paw prints in the game trail told us that the waterhole got plenty of visitors. We didn't see other wildlife show up, but we spent the whole day in the field, conducting the survey for which we had come. Later that day, Jasper Evans invited us to stay in his bunkhouse not far from his main residence. We took him up on his offer, and broke camp the following morning and moved into his makeshift bunkhouse, one whose walls were adorned with more than a hundred empty whiskey/rum/wine bottles that had been incorporated into the concrete of the walls, with their bottoms facing prominently toward to interior of the living area. That recollection was described in a previous *Chronicles of a Footloose Forester* story entitled, Lion Hunters of the Laikipia Plateau. Time passes, but some of the more memorable adventures have been kept alive and relatively fresh, thanks to the hard-wiring mechanisms of helpful brain synapses.

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
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Zambia's Potential Has Not Yet Been Realized

The **Footloose Forester** spent too much time in offices and not enough time in the field to have Zambia stand out in his reverie of African adventures. The large and rural country has not yet found its own political and economic stability in the world, in the opinion of an idealistic **Footloose Forester** who made two trips in the early 1990s. Zambian authorities are still interested in developing and managing their natural resources in a responsible way. So, the work agenda of the **Footloose Forester** was largely one of developing an inventory of environmental agendas, including the creation of an Environmental Protection Agency based on the American model.

That included developing a timetable for exploratory research teams to survey the breadth of options. The **Footloose Forester** recalls making a transportation budget for field trips by the teams of recommended scientists. Based on local costs for renting two automobiles and the mandatory use of their own drivers, the bill was projected to be over \$31,000 for a single exploratory period of about a month. In the end, the **Footloose Forester** recommended that the U.S. Agency for International Development, who was footing the bill for the project, buy their own jeeps for the project instead of renting automobiles locally; and thereafter have them on hand when the project was completed. That is the way it went down.

Land capability in Zambia is far greater than its place in world agriculture would indicate. That has a lot to do with the confiscatory policies, past and present, of the government(s) in regard to owning land. Today very few private citizens have their own land, so are not developing it to its potential. Some 47% of the country has arable land suitable for agricultural expansion, but currently only 14% of those lands have been developed. From that point of view, Zambia could become much more productive in future years.

One sector of the agro-pastoral milieu that is awaiting a transformation in management approach is the "miambo" woodlands of millions of acres of scattered tropical hardwood trees. Their potential use in the manufacture of hardwood furniture and other manufactured products has not yet been realized.

One tangible reminder of Zambia and its woodlands is the carved steamer trunk that Footloose Forester hauled aboard his returning flight to Nairobi. When he saw it for sale in the courtyard of the Pamodzi Hotel in Lusaka, he knew that it was one of a kind, like every other carved *objet d'art* he saw in Africa. And he also knew that it was now or never in having a souvenir that would be useful in future years. That steamer trunk now gets yearly treatment with Tung oil to keep it from cracking as it continues in its service as a foot locker at the bottom of the bed in one of the Pellek's bedrooms.

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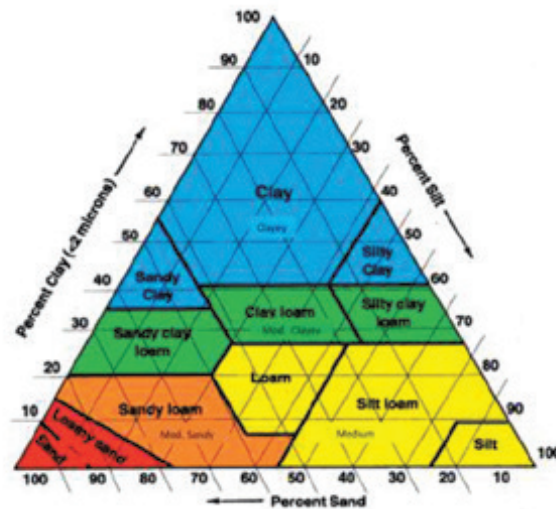
Sand, Silt, and Clay

At one time or another in our everyday lives, everyone is guilty of using the improper or imprecise word or words to describe things around us. Some of us do it thoughtlessly and often, others of us do it because we haven't come up with better words to describe things. The more precise the words, the greater the clarity in the description. And there are consequences when we miss the mark badly.

SAND

When it comes to describing soil it is reasonable to assume that most people have a clear enough understanding of the basic idea of sand. For example; the soil type commonly described as sand is readily perceived as loose, gritty, and grainy particles that are large enough to be isolated and set aside as individual specks. Sand as a noun is a legitimate description as a soil type. The word sand as an adjective also has technical applications and implications. There are various kinds of sand: quartz sand, silica sand, coral sand, etc. In soil science, various sands are further described in size ranges such as very coarse sands, coarse sands, medium, fine, and very fine sands. Thus, knowing the parent materials and size ranges of various sands helps to define and describe the overall soil matrix in which they occur. Precise words as descriptors of parent materials is one thing; and knowing particle sizes as complementary descriptors of sands helps us to understand why some agricultural crops can be grown in sand and others cannot; and why some kinds of sand are better able to meet certain objectives than others.

The precise size category of a sand as part of its suite of descriptors can be deduced by sifting a bucket of sand through a series of nested sieves and adding up the percentages that pass through each sieve. Perhaps it does not seem important to distinguish a medium sand from a fine sand, but if virtually everything found in the bucket stayed in the uppermost sieve, it is likely that the soil type is not sand, at all. Particles that are too large to classify as sand must be classified as gravels. On the other end of the size range, if virtually all of the properly dried samples in the bucket pass through the lowest, finest sieve; then the soil type might be a silt or a clay.



(Soil texture triangle)

Why is it important to know the difference between a sand and a silt, or between a silt and a clay? Because most crops cannot be grown in true sands, especially when rainfall is limiting. Yet, sand soils can support vegetation if the key environmental factors are factored in; and if the proper kinds of vegetation are chosen for the task.

Dune stabilization has been very successful using *Casuarina equisetifolia*, a tropical tree that is known to thrive in deep sands. The **Footloose Forester** was pleased to see over 200,000 *Casuarina* trees transform large patches of barren sand at Camh Ranh Bay in Viet Nam into stabilized landscapes that also developed with aesthetic appeal into sources of useful building materials, on sites where they did not previously exist. Close to the sea, such species as seashore saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*) are capable of holding back dunes under the added stresses of constant wind and salt spray. In desert areas, there are numerous *Acacia* tree species that can thrive there.

On a much larger scale, millions of hectares of arid and semi-arid lands around the world that are primarily sandy in nature can and do benefit through afforestation campaigns, using tree and shrub species that can survive in sand. Afforestation refers to the planting of trees and shrubs in places where they did not naturally exist. Vivid examples of successful afforestation campaigns can be seen in Mali, Niger, China, and elsewhere.

SILT

Silt as a soil descriptor is also generally and widely understood. The process of silting of delta regions and the formation of silt banks along rivers are apt examples as relatable circumstances germane to silt and siltation, but not exclusively so. They derive from similar parent materials as sands, and they are also defined by their particle size. Indeed, the fine particle size of silt facilitates displacing associated silts into ground water and dispersing them in the process of lateral transport. Silt is also dispersed into the wind, particularly at the site of active volcanoes.

At 50 microns in diameter as the lower limit of particle size, individual grains of silt are barely visible with the naked eye, and only then with the aid of strong light. Silt as a soil type in relatively pure form is not often found in nature because the narrow size range of silts is transitory and progressive. Breakdown of larger particles of gravel and sand, through weathering, grinding and erosion, is continuous until it reaches the end point which is clay. Not too much can be said about silt to distinguish it from very fine sand at one end of the

size measurement range and clay at the other end, if only because individual particles of silt are so small. As a personal observation, however; the **Footloose Forester** is confident in stating that a person with good eyesight can distinguish individual particles of dry silt under good light conditions. And that means seeing something as small as 50 microns in diameter.

In a few areas of the world relatively pure silt soils can be found. The upland slopes in the Volcanoes region of El Salvador are rich in silt that is a direct result and by-product of the emission of volcanic ash that has been dispersed over a period of centuries. Deep profiles of silt that are more commonly thought of as ash blankets ring the upper slopes of Volcan Santa Ana and Volcan Izalco in Santa Ana Department of El Salvador. The area is also an important coffee growing region that has benefitted from the natural mineralization and easily workable silt soils. One can only speculate whether the production of high quality coffee is a direct result of the fertilizing benefits of the silt soils.

This chronicle entry is meant to be more than a dry, semi-technical discussion of soil particles and their properties. The **Footloose Forester** learned valuable lessons on the ground about how fundamental natural resources such as soil, water, forests, and grasslands are intertwined and interactive in the varied landscapes we humans occupy and depend on for our very existence. In the case of silt as a natural resource, the ash blankets in the remote uplands of the Volcanoes Region of El Salvador constitute one of the best forest fire fighting tools available. A person is able to dig it up and use it to easily snuff out ground fires by smothering the flames. At one time, the **Footloose Forester** and a Salvadoran Ministry of Agriculture employee were able to extinguish 100 meters of ground fire by simply digging into the ground with our hands and scooping up the silty soil to snuff out the flames.

In the nomograph above, commonly referred to as a soil texture triangle, the precise description of a soil type can be determined if you have data on the particle size distribution to back it up. As deduced, most arable soils contain admixtures of sand, silt, and clay.

As important as soil texture is in the agricultural milieu, there are differences of opinion regarding the percentages of sand, silt, and clay that should be used as boundary descriptors. As a result, there are a half dozen variations of the soil texture triangle used around the world, although the one used in the United States is considered to be the standard model.

CLAY

At the opposite end of the size range of soil particles we find clay. Paradoxically, when we handle a clod of wet, heavy soil that we may readily identify as clay, we might be precisely correct. The paradox in play has to do with the fact that clay particles are so small that they cannot be inspected individually. They are smaller than silt particles but can, nonetheless, form into clods because of the binding properties of organic matter that is normally contained in native soils. Water tension within the soil matrix also helps to keep particles coalesced.

In a soils laboratory, clay is extracted by washing the contents of the whole, natural sample through the entire set of nested sieves and then concentrating the clay found in suspension by using a centrifuge. Individual soil bodies may be classified as clays in a general way, but similar to soil particles of sand and silt, the clays may also be classified into mapping units to include their various other properties. Perhaps more than named sandy soil types or silt soils, it is the panoply of chemical and physical properties of various clays that sets them apart

and makes those characteristics so important in agriculture. Microscopic clay particles may be small but they are the most chemically reactive and thus are vitally important in every aspect of soil fertility.

Even clays are different enough that good descriptors are useful in distinguishing one from another. In the most basic description, one group of clays can be described as sticky in structure; and another group can be described as non-sticky. It also has to do with a shrink-swell capacity of their cell structures. Those that exhibit shrinking when dry and swelling when wet are known as 2:1 ratio clays. Those that don't exhibit shrinking and swelling are generally referred as 1:1 ratio clays. Needless to say, the working qualities are very different, thus knowing what kind of clay a farmer has makes for fundamental differences in their management. As the final step in the breakdown of larger soil particles, various clays around the world present the most challenges when it comes to issues of flooding and extreme drought. Both circumstances have to be dealt with because both circumstances limit the practical value of any parcel of land.

There is a quite fuzzy recollection of anecdotal stories about clays about which the **Footloose Forester** sometimes daydreams. One of them is about the dark colored 2:1 shrink-swell clay found at Brickfield, Trinidad. When he was working the dry land there with its distinctly wide open cracks in the soil, it began to rain. He hoped to see the soil profile swell up with moisture, so he stuck a pencil into the crack and watched as the surface of the soil began to close shut. In just a few minutes the surface was sealed and only the eraser at the end of the pencil was visible.

One other remarkable memory is about a pale-yellow clay that he was analysing at a depth of 1.5 meters in a tropical forest in Indonesia. With its high rainfall in the region, soil weathering was extreme and extended deep into soil profiles. But even at 1.5 meters it was almost all pure clay, including adjacent to some stone parent material that formed the spine of the highest hill in Ujung Kulon National Park. The stage of weathering was so obvious that the **Footloose Forester** was able to break off chunks of the sunken stone and proceed to gouge out the soft exterior with his fingernails. In a matter of minutes he had reduced the stone to a pile of clay. The stone itself could rightly be labeled as claystone: one minute it was stone, and the next minute it was clay.

As a final anecdote about clay, the **Footloose Forester** allowed the contents of a dream to seep out into his waking consciousness to provide another observation about clay. The sizable accumulation of decomposed leaves shed from an American Elm tree in Newton, New Jersey convinced him that decomposed litter from trees and shrubs becomes incorporated into the ground as clay; clay as a size descriptor and indistinguishable in appearance from any other dark colored clay.

The reason he believes that is because at a height of about five feet above ground, he excavated several hundred grams of decomposed leaves from a deep fissure in a crook of the parent tree. The decomposed material, by now readily recognized as organic matter looked like and had the texture of clay. No sand, no silt. The real-world implication is clear...when archeological remains are unearthed, they are usually discovered as buried artifacts. The cumulative depth of "soil" that covers them, for the most part, is a result of hundreds or thousands of years of shed plant materials that eventually develop into a soil profile. Of course, shifting sands in desert ecosystems, burying under volcanic eruptions, and rapid depositions due to river and stream bed shifting also contribute to the development of soil profiles that mask what is underneath. And that is why archeologists acknowledge that there are tens of thousands of artifacts under the prominent mounds you can still see in the jungles around Tikal, Guatemala. Archeologists have been busy unearthing them for decades but there are thousands more still awaiting to be "discovered."



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Simple Questions, Complex Answers

Did you ever notice that some people in a group get irritated when you give a complex answer to a seemingly simple question? Or, conversely, when you give a simple answer to a complex question? Most mixed groups of everyday people are represented by both personality types; those who are looking for simple answers and those who are not satisfied with simple answers.

If, for example, you ask a car mechanic what is wrong with your rough running engine, she might give you the simple answer in a few words. That is not to say that she probably knows there are several things that may be wrong, but if she perceives that you are looking for a simple and direct answer, she has one. Ask a simple question and you get a simple answer. Alas, many things in life are not simple and voluntarily confining ourselves to posing simple questions to complex issues is not likely to produce satisfactory answers.

During the course of our busy lives we very often skip the complex question in favor of an immediate, simple one. If we choose to ask a simple question, we should not be upset if the retort in the form of a simple answer does not satisfy us. That also goes for questions that are only pondered but never really asked. If we privately ponder questions but don't openly ask them, we are personally at a loss for not obtaining the satisfaction of an answer. Needless to say, we may not like the answer, or agree with the answer. Often enough we don't get an answer. Sometimes there is no answer. Or answers. Without intending to, we may be posing a simple question to an issue about which there is no easy answer. That may be because a simple question about an issue that is multifaceted is not going to produce a complete answer. At this stage, we segue into the obvious. Most things in life are not obvious, single issue topics for our ponderings. Thus, the query more than likely should be composed of more than one question, to satisfy the possibility of more than one answer.

As a practicing forest consultant who rubbed elbows with many inspirational mentors over the years, the **Footloose Forester** picked up several good tips when dealing with clients and while trying to solve problems. Some of them had to do with satisfying the immediate concerns of clients. If they were willing to pay for a nickel analysis, you gave them an answer worth a nickel. If they were willing to pay a quarter, you gave them a more detailed analysis. Your company supervisor usually gave you a time allotment, thus the depth of your analysis was always going to have set limits.

Another important bit of advice and an observation voiced openly by scholars was to ask the right questions. Eventually and inevitably, if you didn't get the right answers it may have been because you were not asking the right questions. Or asking the right people.

During a TV interview between Charlie Rose and a Professor of Management at Harvard Business School in late December 2010, the **Footloose Forester** tuned in late to catch just a few pearls of wisdom. Professor Clayton Christensen was making the point that he instructed his students at Harvard to ask the right questions. He then paraphrased Albert Einstein with a reference in which Einstein said that 95% of the answer lies in asking the right questions about the problem. He went on to say that even at the national level (in government) some key officials don't ask the right questions. All too often, the people we ask about truly complex matters don't really have good answers, or any answers at all. Accordingly, the **Footloose Forester** tried to make the point to clients and colleagues on his own staff that they may not have asked the right questions; or sought out the people who might have given them some answers that they were interested in and/or tasked to incorporate into their proceedings. It usually verged on offending them, but he believed that it needed to be said.

There are, of course, correct answers that fit with simple questions. A simple question is: What is the capital of South Africa? The simple answer is...Pretoria. But the issue itself is not as simple as it seems. The Legislative Capital of South Africa is Pretoria, but the country has long recognized Cape Town as the Administrative Capital and Bloemfontein as the Judicial Capital.

Shifting gears, there is the old pejorative that people use to disparage someone else: Ask a dumb question and get a dumb answer. None of us wants to be perceived as being dumb, so thoughtful people usually take a moment to think before they ask questions. On the other hand, many a college teacher makes it a point to their students that the only dumb question is the one that is not asked. To their everlasting credit, none of the college professors that **Footloose Forester** has known ever made a student feel small when the student asked a question.

Finally, there are the rhetorical questions that sometimes do not deserve an answer. At other times, however; they are profound enough and serious enough that they deserve to be answered. Nothing much changes with regard to that category of rhetorical questions, if for no other reason than if they could be answered, they probably would not be asked in the first place.



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Potatoes, Corn, Wheat, and Rice

You probably know as much about rice as you do about potatoes, corn, or wheat. Your consumption of french fries, baked potatoes, potato chips, and mashed potatoes probably puts the common potato high on the list of foods you regularly consume. But how much do you know about various varieties of potatoes that are favored in the preparation of french fries or potato chips? Most people have heard of Russet potatoes and Maine potatoes, but varietal names for potatoes seem to be largely unimportant, although they are known to the geneticists who develop them and the farmers who grow them.

The same situation goes for corn, also known as maize. Humans consume sweet corn fresh on the cob and whole kernel and crushed corn from cans but, in the main, we think of corn in a general way. A limited number of varieties with names that we know, such as Luther, white corn and, Indian corn are sought out for their individuality but most laymen know nothing beyond a few varieties. There are distinctions, however, that are important in their milling characteristics and subsequent large-scale use for specific purposes.

Sweet corn on the cob is *Zea mays* var. *saccharata* or *Z. mays* var. *rugosa*. Popcorn is *Zea mays* var. *everta* and the variety used in corn flour is *Zea mays* var. *amylacea*. Among the field corn varieties grown for animal feed, two main types (of many experimental varieties) are well known to corn farmers. *Zea mays* var. *indurata* is known as a flint type that has a hard kernel when dried; and *Zea mays* var. *indentata* is known as dent, with a softer kernel.

Other than among corn farmers, we know even less about the numerous genetic strains and experimental varieties that are grown for animal feed or for export to other countries. Volume production of “field corn” may be high, but varietal distinctions go largely unnoticed in the general public.

Wheat that goes into bread and pastries is usually discussed in very general terms, with only occasional reference to the variety of wheat that is the essence of baking qualities and taste differences. Two broad types of wheat are grown worldwide, *Triticum aestivum* and *Triticum durum*. Spring wheat and winter wheat are grown in different seasons but they are also different varieties of the same botanical plant. We as consumers may favor a certain taste but we seldom seek out a specific variety of wheat as an essential ingredient in our baking recipes.

When it comes to rice, we are more aware and discriminating than we realize. Although most Americans probably don't eat rice as a regular staple in their diets and the consumption of rice falls below either potatoes, corn or wheat in the form of baked products, most of us have a passing familiarity with some of the varieties and trade names of rice. Long-grain rice, Calrose, brown rice, Jasmine rice, and others are all distinctive enough in their varietal characteristics to rate a passing nod in regards to familiarity. Add to that the other descriptors that distinguish one rice variety from another. Indian rice, Thai rice, Japanese rice and Carolina rice are a few of the geographic labels that single out the distinctiveness that also has varietal implications. Marketing has also made a big impact in enlightening all of us about how many varieties of rice are available. One small market in our area has a display shelf featuring Basmati Rice, Jasmine Rice, Sushi Rice, Mexican Fiesta Rice, Long-Grained Rice and Wild Rice. They come in boxes, clear plastic bags and small packets. Wholesale markets often sell rice in jute and woven bags weighing 25-50 pounds.

Like many other fruits, vegetable, and grains that are grown in different climates and soils around the world, some varieties of rice favor certain growing conditions over other conditions. Some thrive in flooded land but many varieties grow well in uplands. The appearance and taste of the grain are a few of the differences that are not so obvious. That is also why botanists felt a need to make distinctions in their scientific nomenclature. Asian rice was originally described by the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus and given the name *Oryza sativa* Linnaeus. Other common varieties are *Oryza sativa* spp. Indica (Indian rice); *O. sativa* spp. japonica (Japanese rice); *O. sativa* spp. javanica (Javan) and *O. sativa* spp. glaberrima Steudel (African).



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On Screening Job Applicants

Filling vacant jobs sometimes employs screening procedures that go beyond just filling out employment forms and answering a few interview questions. Sometimes the employers want to know how an applicant thinks.

One question on an actual job screening exam for a job as a shipping inspector was “What do you see on the sheet of paper before you?” Describe it.

On the sheet of plain white paper was a short yellow pencil. Of the several applicants for the job of inspector, some of them may have written the following, or similar response:



APPLICANT #1

I see a sharpened yellow pencil. It is short.

Other applicants may have written the following, or similar:

APPLICANT 2

The short, round yellow pencil resting on the sheet of white paper is approximately 3 ½ inches long, is freshly sharpened with a knife or blade, based on the clean appearance of its shaved surfaces. The person who sharpened it did not use uniform pressure because two sides are unequally deep, and the other sides did not get sharpened, based on their more weathered color. There is a KOA logo printed on one side that indicates that the pencil was manufactured for advertising purposes. Other printed information indicates that it is a No. 2 pencil, a reference to the hardness of the graphite used for its core. The two pieces of milled wood that surround the graphite (lead) core appear to be made of cedar. Most, but not all, pencils are manufactured with Western Red Cedar, thus the raw material probably originated in the United States where Western Red Cedar is a native tree.

There is a pink rubber eraser at one end that has apparently never been used to erase anything because there are no signs of abrasion. That suggests that the pencil was designed to be short; or had been broken before attaining its present length, or may have been used in the past without the need to erase its own pencil marks or anything else. The short yellow pencil is presumed to weigh a few grams, equal to similar pencils that have been put into consumer service without evidence that it has been affected by immersion in water, or discolored by staining chemicals.

Applicant #1 who described the short pencil in a general way might be labeled as a lumper, a person who sees and describes things in broad terms. He/she would not be incorrect in their description, but there is much more to any description. Splitters relish the opportunity to provide details.

Splitters often feel a need and a responsibility to describe things in some detail because they usually see the world and physical objects as being composed of various layers of complexity. Applicant #2 is probably a splitter. And although the persons administering the screening test to the applicants probably did not suggest how they should describe the pencil, they are interested in the content of the answers.

If you were interviewing candidates for a job as an inspector, who would you choose? A lumper who was inclined to give an accurate but simple description? Or a splitter who provided information that may be useful in describing things that have many, sometimes important attributes?



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The Longest Day of John Steele

(Revised and Edited)

Private John M. Steele (1912–1969) was the American paratrooper made famous in the movie, *The Longest Day*. He literally landed from the air in Sainte-Mère-Église, the first village in Normandy liberated by the Americans on D-Day, June 6, 1944.



On the night of the D-Day invasion (June 5–6, 1944), American soldiers of the 82nd Airborne parachuted into the area west of Ste-Mère-Église in successive waves. The town had been the target of an aerial attack and a stray incendiary bomb had set fire to a house east of the town square. The church bell was rung to alert the town of the emergency and townspeople turned out in large numbers to form a bucket brigade supervised by members of the German garrison. By 0100hrs, the town square was well-lit and filled with German soldiers and villagers when two sticks (planeloads of paratroopers) from the 1st and 2nd battalions were dropped in error directly over the village.

The paratroopers were easy targets and Steele was one of only a few non-casualties. His parachute was caught on the steeple of the village church in Ste-Mère-Église, leaving him hanging from its roof-top to witness the carnage below. The wounded paratrooper hung there limply for two hours, pretending to be dead, before the

Germans took him prisoner. Steele later escaped from the Germans and rejoined his division when US troops of the 3rd Battalion, 505 Parachute Infantry Regiment attacked the village, capturing thirty Germans and killing another eleven. For these actions and his wounds, Steele was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor and the Purple Heart for being wounded in combat.

But his story as a brave soldier starts much earlier and continued well past the episode in Sainte Mère Église. There is much more to the story of paratrooper John Steele.

There are some inconsistencies in various stories that have been cobbled together about him, but it is clear that John Steele was a fearless and brave soldier. He had volunteered his service as a paratrooper and had earlier served in the 82nd Airborne Division in North Africa, prior to parachuting into combat in Sicily with F Company, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. On the night of 9 July 1943, John broke his left leg and was sent to a hospital in North Africa. After he recovered he returned to Italy and fought with his unit from Salerno to Naples.

During his jump into Ste. Mère Église on the night of 5-6 June 1944, John was wounded by a shell fragment and was unable to steer his parachute. As he dangled from the church spire while a battle was going on below him, he tried to cut himself free but his jump knife slipped from his hand. He dangled helplessly for more than two hours, until a German soldier named Rudolf May cut him down and took him prisoner. Despite being wounded, he escaped three days later and rejoined a nearby Allied unit. He was then transferred to a hospital in England for recovery.

After recovery from his latest wounds, he returned to action and parachuted into action near Nijmegen, Netherlands where he participated in the liberation of that city. In November of 1944 he participated in the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes region near Reims, France. When the Allies crossed the Rhine River into Germany in early 1945, John Steele was there, advancing with his unit from Frankfurt to the crossing of the Elbe River, when World War II ended. He finally returned to the United States in September 1945.

John Steele returned to Ste. Mère Église several times since the war and was made an honorary citizen there. Although he wished to be buried there, that dream was not realized. He died of cancer in 1969, at the age of 57 in Fayetteville, North Carolina.



Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

Cheat the System, Cheat Society

This essay may look familiar, because it is. It, however; needs an update for obvious reasons.

[original] There are plenty of self-help books out there. Some are long and fairly comprehensive. Others are short and to the point. Tips on building, painting, wiring, or baking come in many packages. Kudos to those who defer from their own limited knowledge to venture into the realm of experts who are proud to share what they know. Winners all around.

Nothing to be ashamed of if you must look at a diagram of a desk you have to assemble from parts. Manufacturers increasingly build things in sections and sell their products to consumers who must then assemble the items on their own. They help by providing assembly instructions and even the names and numbers of various nuts and bolts. Self-help is not only an aspiration—it is a requirement.

When it comes to story writing, there are also books and articles written about how to get started, how to infuse interest in the story by infusing interest into the prospective readers, how to make a story shine, stand out, and attract readers. All well and good, as long as one considers the process as self-help. The lonely writer, however; has to put all the ingredients, as it were, into the recipe before it is baked.

But when it comes to writing an essay for a school assignment, the payoff is not a bakery product done by an amateur baker and only for self-satisfaction. Essays as class assignments are tests of acquired knowledge of grammar, syntax, organization, and perhaps history and worldly affairs. To earn a decent grade, an essay should be the ready-to-wear attire that is the property of the person who owns the garment, not the fabricator of the garment who then profits when someone else puts it on. With the gradual use of IT algorithms to compare the text of student essays with the work of known authors, it is now much easier to spot plagiarism. Plagiarists get penalized, or even expelled. Paying someone to write essays for you is an even more devious form of cheating. If the person who depends upon the creative work of someone else manages to pass through formal schooling, that person has succeeded by cheating the system that establishes norms for competence. In later life, that same person may continue to cheat others by posing as someone who purportedly met the qualifications of the position they hold. Society loses when we allow that to happen.

Consider the advertising message that found its way into the comments section of one chronicle written by the **Footloose Forester**. He declines to point a finger at a particular person but the message below speaks for itself.

Having a summer holiday can be a boon or a bane for the students; it is a boon because you neither have to study for long and extended hours nor you have to stay up all night to complete the pending academic paper. However, it can be a bane because you don't know how to utilise your time in a meaningful and productive manner. Even in vacations sometimes students feel burdened because they have to complete the academic essays which teachers have assigned them for vacations. If the task of writing an essay is difficult for you then, instead of investing your time and energy in completing these essays you should contact best essay writing service UK in order to save your time and energy. In all probability taking help from an academic writing service will enable you to indulge yourself in cool and fun activities. If you are ruffled and chafed because you don't know what to do with your extra time in vacations, then no need to fret for you can opt something cool from the below-given list to make the best use of this blissful time.

Sink or swim is not only a cliché, it is a challenge. A hired essay writer can, for a price, offer a beautiful garment for you to wear; but when it is time to enter the water to either sink or swim...well, we know what is in store.

This essay is herewith revised because to leave the issue open is akin to going along with a practice that is an open invitation to cheating. A bold reminder that the **Footloose Forester** is not merely looking around for dragons to slay; the unexpected text came into his shared blog site in mid-December 2018. The open invitation to cheat is duly committed to a Copy + Paste entry, as follows:

Are you a college student that finds it tough to write assignments on your own? Don't worry; just connect with our Cheap Assignment Writing Service UK where we make sure to provide students with top quality papers at very affordable prices. And that's not all; we also guarantee them to get 'A+' grades instantly after submission.

Speak now or forever hold your peace? Sorry, some of us are not wired that way.



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Calling B.S. On

The time has come to call B.S. on TV advertisements that use hard-sell promotional tactics to convince us that this _____ is the best _____ you will ever buy, or your money back. Or, if you want to find the lowest prices for hotels, go to _____. Oh, there are plenty are products and services that could be inserted into the blanks but there is one that set me off like a firecracker. When the founder, CEO, and TV pitchman for MyPillow twice graced my TV screen within an hour with a faulty presentation, that was enough to stir the **Footloose Forester** into action. What else would you expect from an acknowledged contrarian? He is also an unabashed cynic and purveyor of critical analysis, so no apologies for calling B.S. on one of the most obvious shams in recent memory.

What was so misleading about a TV commercial purporting to show that the two other pillows of competitors are inferior? The answer has two parts: what the spokesman did to disguise the truth, and what he did not do to enlarge the truth. When the MyPillow pitchman demonstrated the pillow of the first competitor, he said that when you lay your head on the pillow, the shape of the corner will go down. No, on its own it will not go down. He made it go down by pressing on it. With the second pillow, he had a male volunteer lie with his head on the taller side of a firm, sculptured pillow that is designed to keep head and neck aligned. He pointed out that the head and neck were not in alignment. But he did not show the volunteer lying with his head resting on the other, lower side. The pillow in question was designed to have a high side and a low side, to account for slightly different head-neck alignments of various people. Thus, the demonstration was B.S. for avoiding the alternative choice of sides. In the case of the second pillow, the **Footloose Forester** should know, because we have two of those pillows at home. Finally, over 60% of trained observers from the Consumer Union and reporting in a recent issue of Consumer Reports did not agree that MyPillow was superior to several others tested. In the current absence of the commercials on TV, methinks that the ad was taken down.

Another line of commercial advertising that does not instill confidence in a well-traveled **Footloose Forester** are those promising the best prices for hotel rooms. Trivago shows the array of prices for the same hotel room in one version of its pitch for smart hotel booking. Most often, the top choice still has a price tag of over \$100 per day. Maybe for a four-star hotel overseas, but you should be aware that good, clean and air-conditioned hotels in many overseas destinations in Asia go for \$20-\$30 per day. What is best for you is what you think is best for you. The difference is, the very comfortable smaller hotels do not pay for TV advertising and are not generally known to would-be travelers who choose to book on-line and compute their budgets based on expensive advertising pitches.

If TV viewers choose to limit themselves to televised advertising pitches, they will end up paying more. No doubt that booking in advance cuts out some of the anticipations of securing a room, but it also eliminates some of the adventures of finding real bargains, in the same part of town in most cities and; and near the action.

Adventure in planning a trip may be curtailed if the would-be traveler starts to add up the costs, based on the advertising seen on TV, in the glossy pages of travel magazines, or even online. As a true contrarian, the **Footloose Forester** does not hesitate to say, if you see it advertised in glitzy commercials, you will not see the best price. For that, you have to travel to those dreamed about destinations and discover for yourself. When you get there (a big part of the total adventure package) you will come to find out that there are, indeed, clean, air-conditioned hotels, guest houses, youth hostels, YMCAs, and other places that will not break the bank. Backpackers know these things and many of them are quite willing to share with you. The **Footloose Forester** remembers paying \$20-28 a day for air-conditioned hotel rooms in Viet Nam and Cambodia when there were \$100+ hotels nearby.

What has been said about securing affordable hotels at vacation venues can also be said about buying automobile insurance. Yes, 15 minutes could save you 15% or more on car insurance, but you could probably save even more by looking elsewhere, perhaps at an insurance company that does not have a huge advertising budget. To be sure, advertising drives business to the featured advertisers, but you have to do a thorough job of research to uncover the truth about who the real cost beaters really are.



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Paragliding Above A Welch Meadow

Wales has a special place in the dreams of the **Footloose Forester**. It's mostly about flying. Ever since the first time he left the ground in a flying machine, the **Footloose Forester** has had hundreds of dreams about flying through the air; sometimes in light planes; sometimes in deep throated four-engine transports; and sometimes in the quiet comfort of the upper deck of trans-Atlantic stratoliners. But mostly the dreams feature silent contraptions that he fashions out of cloth or other material, for short flights to escape immediate danger. Most of the dreams also involve the hurried fashioning of a special coat or a fabric wing design that takes the **Footloose Forester** over mountains, under power lines, into large caves, and elsewhere, but usually to escape danger. Getting into the air and then staying there has always been one of the struggles in the dreams. Most of the background material for the dreams, however, is based on real flights in real flying machines.

First, there was a short flight in a Piper Cub over Red Bank, New Jersey. Next, on a long, bumpy flight with Eastern Airlines to Puerto Rico. Then, in several tiny helicopters while working with the U.S. Forest Service in California; and to taking the controls of a Bell H-13 copter as a flight candidate in the U.S. Army in both California and Oklahoma. Dozens of flights on both military and commercial aircraft in Europe and North Africa cemented the love affair with flight and the beginning of decades of dreams about flying. Over seven hundred flights in future years would eventually lead to a special compartment of dreams about flying.

No flights were better, however, than those gliding silently above a highland Welch pasture in 1993 under the canopy of a paraglider. The **Footloose Forester** had come from Kenya to Wales to attend paraglider flight school; and he had to make a reservation some months in advance. The last flight came too soon, and put a different spin on the long-planned vacation and his plans to fly higher and further in the web seat of a paraglider in more challenging locations.

While coming in for a landing in tall gorse, after two running steps on solid ground, the **Footloose Forester** heard a loud popping sound in his right leg. It started to stiffen up immediately and he reluctantly begged off another flight for that day. He and his instructor still had to pack out about two miles with all the equipment, even though the **Footloose Forester** was limping all the way. Only the following year did the **Footloose Forester** confirm that he had snapped a couple of ligaments in his upper leg. The confirmation was visual, in the form of a cavity of sunken skin when it became conclusive that parted ligaments don't grow back, and the muscle in that area atrophied.

Limp or not, pain or not, the **Footloose Forester** put Plan B into effect and went golfing the next day at Oswestry Golf Club in Wales, the home course of Ian Woosnan. Not one to waste an opportunity, the **Footloose Forester** played two other golf courses in England before returning to Kenya. The last day had its own sweet memories -- a birdie from about 40 feet and four pars in a row to finish out the round at the Hainault Forest course in the London Borough of Redbridge. But Wales will always bring back memories of flying.

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Lion Hunters Of The Laikipia Plateau

Going up-country in Kenya with a real adventurer was what **Footloose Forester**® hoped all jobs would be like. His friend agreed to the using of his full name and association openly, so the **Footloose Forester** may eventually proceed to tell a few more tales that are remarkable, in their own way. For the moment, however, it would be safe to proceed with a chronicle in which Andre DeGeorges, the African big game hunter who had just recently returned from Uganda, decided to take his own Toyota 4 x 4 and personal supplies to conduct an official field trip relating to hunting game animals on private lands. At the time, all hunting on public lands in Kenya was banned; but Andre was on a crusade to change some of that.

The **Footloose Forester** was delighted to be part of that crusade. In retrospect, we were successful; but Andre gets most of the credit for his foresight and dogged determination. A few years after we finished our field studies and submitted our report, the Government of Kenya enacted two separate laws allowing private land owners to harvest game animals on their own land, and to supply game meat to restaurants under license agreements, but unfortunately not for trophy hunting, where the major profits from wildlife management are to be made. For example, only about 2% of a game species population can be harvested for trophies; and from within 12-25% limits of annual herd size that is permitted for meat producers.

In an e-mail to the **Footloose Forester** only a few months ago, Andre mentioned the name of Jasper Evans, a rancher who lived on the Laikipia Plateau, over a hundred miles north of Nairobi. Jasper's ranch was of modest size, as semi-desert ranches go on the Laikipia Plateau. Maybe its 30,000 acres might seem large, but it was smaller than some we later visited while conducting our fact-finding surveys.

On the first day at the Evans ranch, Andre and the **Footloose Forester** chose to camp at a watering hole about a half mile from the main house. We interrupted the nap of a cheetah that was sleeping on a grassy bench above the watering hole, so we differentially staked out our campsite below the watering hole. That also gave a wide berth for other animals visiting for a drink, whenever they wanted. The next day we were invited to lunch, to try some of Jasper's homemade gazelle jerky; and then to stay at one of his outbuildings.

Andre reminded the **Footloose Forester** in the e-mail that Jasper had constructed its walls from thousands of empty glass whisky/brandy/wine bottles. It wasn't fancy but it was colorful. The following morning, Jasper directed us to the ranch of his son, who had, like himself, been a licensed big game hunter before the days

when the Kenyan government banned public hunting. Along with the directions to Simon's ranch, Jasper told us that Simon had been mauled by a lion, so had a huge scar on his right arm.

Ten or fifteen miles later, Andre and **Footloose** turned off a dirt road and up a slight incline to where a white rancher was standing in the sun near the road. As we approached, **Footloose Forester** noticed that the man had an ugly scar on his right arm. This must be Simon. He greeted us warmly when we mentioned Jasper's name; then he told us to go up to the main house where he would join us shortly. After we entered, his wife asked us to have a seat. The **Footloose Forester** chose the chair directly across from the door; and as he sat down he realized that the rug that he stepped over was made from a lion's hide—head and all—and was the lion that had mauled Simon.

Back at Jasper Evan's ranch, the **Footloose Forester** also met another hunter who had killed a lion. In fact, she had killed nine lions. She was an adventurous Brit who lived in another of Jasper's outbuildings, but as his employee. Her name was Debbie Atkins, a name supplied by Andre from his own notebook. The **Footloose Forester** only recalls being there to interview her. She had come to Kenya as a traveler, but stayed to work with Jasper Evans as his camel master. Since Jasper could not continue his previous life's work as a licensed hunter, he looked for other ways to sustain his income.

He chose to assemble a herd of camels and take tourists on camel safaris. And Debbie Atkins was the one that cared for his string of camels. But when a lion killed one of her younger camels, she vowed to strike back. She told the **Footloose Forester** that one loophole in the Kenyan law allowed farmers and ranchers to kill lions, if they could prove which lion had been responsible, and if they secured the proper permissions. So, although Debbie was not a hunter before she became a camel master, the lions killed so many of her camels over time, that she personally shot nine of them. As it happened, she and Simon hunted together for safety reasons. One final memory of the Jasper Evans ranch: Debbie offered **Footloose Forester** a cup of cool camel's milk. He must admit it was even better than cow's milk.



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The Face Of God

With Tears in My Eyes

Of the many times when melancholia starts to overwhelm his senses, the **Footloose Forester** is often visited by a couple of stories that can easily bring tears to his eyes. Although he was never an openly religious person, he was always a spiritual one. Many times he saw God in the sunrise and in the sunset, on the face of mountains, heard his presence in the wind through the pine trees, felt his warnings on the brink of danger, and allowed the **Footloose Forester** to see his majesty in the disguised dignity of children. A few of those stories are about barefoot children.

If you ever want to see the **Footloose Forester** break down in tears, just ask him to describe when he looked into the eyes of a Kenyan street waif. The boy was seven or eight years old but was the leader of a group of orphaned boys who wandered the streets of Nairobi, seeking to survive until the next day. Yes, street boys sometimes have the reputation of being unkempt, dirty, and ragged-looking in every way. These were no different. But they were God's children.

When we lived in Nairobi we saw them on a daily basis because they lived on the streets and slept in alleyways. They begged for food wherever they thought they might find a handout. They also offered to watch your parked car, or clean your windshield. And they swiped fruit from food stalls when they were desperate. Desperate but not hopeless.

A Catholic Missionary priest named Father Mike Evans who worked with one group of street orphans in an *ad hoc* way told us about one encounter that reminded the **Footloose Forester** that God protected them. On one occasion when Father Mike met with the group, several of them acknowledged that they were indeed homeless orphans. They also said that they didn't have anybody to care for them. At that point the 8-year old leader rebuked them....**No, you have me!** From that day forward whenever we were in town we looked for the leader and knew that by looking into his eyes we could see the face of God.

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Ezekiel Was a Prophet, Not a Horticulturist

Show me the person who thinks that every single word in the Bible is literally true, and I will show you a person who will be hard-pressed to explain how Methuselah lived to be 900 years old, how Moses managed to herd various dinosaurs from around the world, and how Joshua was able to crumble the walls of Jericho with his puny trumpets.

For the record, the iconoclastic and contrarian **Footloose Forester** has been a steady churchgoer for over 70 years. He believes in the message of Jesus Christ, the greatness of our universe and has faith that we on earth are children of God. But he does not believe every word written by the various authors of the 60 books that nominally constitute the Christian Bible. Although he is particularly fond of parables as a way to explain events to the ignorant and the unenlightened, his level of tolerance has its limits. Consider the following from Ezekiel 17: 22-24

I, too, will take from the crest of the cedar, from its topmost branches tear off a tender shoot, and plant it on a high and lofty mountain... it shall put forth branches and bear fruit, and become a majestic cedar.

Although Ezekiel makes clear that he attributes many wondrous things to the Lord God who commands the trees thus,

And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, bring low the high tree, lift high the lowly tree, wither up the green tree, and make the withered tree bloom.

It does not take an act of faith to believe that fire and disease can bring low the high tree, or that rich soil and adequate moisture can lift high the lowly tree, and that progressive disease can wither up the green tree but fighting that disease can make the withered tree bloom. All of those phenomena occur in nature, under the vigilant gaze of God. When it comes to propagating a cedar from a shoot from the uppermost branches, however; the doubting **Footloose Forester** becomes slightly gobsmailed. Was this a parable about propagation of cedar by cuttings? There is enough hyperbole in biblical passages to make the descriptions quasi-scientific, but it requires one to stretch their imagination beyond normal limits. Perhaps that was part of the art in being considered a Prophet.

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Rosewood By Any Other Name

Most everyone agrees that truth in advertising is a policy that should be followed simply because everyone wants to know what they are getting and to get what they are paying for. Consumers are unanimously in favor of knowing the truth about the products and services that they pay for. When it comes to the producers, manufacturers, and wholesalers, however; the whole truth is seldom a part of the policy. Debatably, nowhere in the field of marketing is the lack of complete transparency more deficient than in the production stream of furniture woods.

Starting with the logging of specialty woods, particularly tropical hardwoods; the procurement, wholesaling, and retailing of both sawn and unsawn logs destined for veneers and furniture manufacture tend to lose their native identities and take on trade names that may or may not be helpful in identifying what the potential consumer will be paying for. It may be a wild exaggeration to suggest that all dark colored automobiles that are on display in a car dealer's showroom should be advertised as merely dark colored cars, of putative equal value and manufactured quality, if those similarly colored cars are Kias, Chevys, Cadillacs, BMWs and Mercedes. But an advertising brochure or showroom display of rosewood furniture is akin to advertising specified dark colored furniture wood without its true identity. The trade name Rosewood covers a multitude of furniture woods derived from several botanical genera and species, logged from the forests on several continents.

In the timber trade, the Rosewood family refers to over 100 species of tropical woods from all over the world. Presumably, according to some literature, all belong to the botanical genus ***Dalbergia***. In marketing practice, however; various tropical hardwoods of several genera are marketed and sold as Rosewood.

There are a few, such as Mexican Rosewood and Cocobolo Rosewood that are not generally given botanical names. One species from Central America and specifically logged in Honduras is simply described as Rosewood and has the scientific name ***Dalbergia stevensonii***. Then, there is a Bolivian Rosewood. Finally, rounding out the representatives from the Americas is Patagonian Rosewood with the botanical nomenclature ***Piptadenia macrocarpa***.

African Rosewood likewise comes from several countries in Africa where tropical forests are exploited for furniture woods derived from several genera. No need to go further into taxonomic nomenclature to make the point regarding the influence of marketing that obscures their legitimate identities. In Southeast Asia,

as well, there are a few furniture woods that are marketed as Rosewood. But on the Indian sub-continent where ***Dalbergia sissoo***, a species that has been cropped in plantations and marketed as Rosewood for almost 200 years, is ironically in dispute as an “official” member of the family of Rosewoods.

The problem with branding Rosewood as a tropical timber with the same common name is that all the various genera and species cannot have the same name if they are not the same species; furthermore, they should not command the same sales price if they are not all equally valuable; and they should not be touted as equals in working qualities, durability, and market celebrity if they are essentially different. Among the characteristics marketers mention are durability, hardness, strength, flexibility, color variations, and figure. Obviously, there are differences. If you are asked to pay for a Mercedes from an auto dealer, he/she should not give you the keys to a Chevy.

For whatever reason, furniture manufacturers and retailers have persisted in using the name Rosewood as a marketing point and sales ploy, although they could insist on and get a fuller description of the woods that have long been a part of the timber trade. It ain't rocket science but it should start at the source, as a gesture in good faith marketing and truth in advertising. Besides, foresters and landowners get a bad name when presumably endangered species are being cut from tropical forests. Some people presume that Rosewood is an endangered species. If that were true for one species, it cannot be true for all species being marketed as Rosewood because the name is too non-specific to be meaningful.

Consumers know enough about the characteristics of Chevys vs. Mercedes cars to decide what they are willing to pay, but they know almost nothing about the Rosewood that is being touted in veneer specialty shops and upscale furniture stores. A Rosewood by any other name would definitely not be as sweet.



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Single Tree Selection Becomes High-Grading

With all the talk about deforestation and the evils of cutting down trees, people everywhere should remember that humans have been cutting down trees ever since they invented the tools to do so. The practice of harvesting trees for posts, poles, and construction wood began just as soon as people realized how valuable trees were in fulfilling many of their needs. And with the coming of the industrial revolution and the invention of huge, powerful machinery, not only was it possible to cut down large trees, it was now possible to haul them away. Along the way, the invention of gasoline-driven chain saws and tractor driven vehicles made it possible for a man to extend his range deep into the forests to extract trophy trees. What foresters now call the single tree selection system of harvesting, has been for two centuries or more, a practice that they also call high-grading.

This chronicle does not pretend to sound the trumpet of a deep historical knowledge regarding the subject matter of high-grading as a common practice in forests around the world, but merely to point out that anyone who shows an interest in viewing old photographs of the logging industry will surely discover that old-time loggers took pride in posing for snapshots with their trophy timbers. A deep-sea fisherman is more eager to pose for photos with a 1000-pound marlin than with a pan fish small enough to nestle into his cupped hand.

Thus it was, in the opinion of the **Footloose Forester**, that the quest for a production quota of timber from any given tract worked its way into the decision to select trees large enough to fill the quota quickly, with the equipment that could handle both large and small trees. Why cut 20 small trees when cutting a few large ones would meet the quota? Besides, larger trees tended to have more valuable heartwood, were able to provide longer, straighter boards, and had relatively less waste, as slabs and exterior trim. If the machinery could handle the size and weight of large trees, they became the individuals of greatest interest in logging operations. They became the favored prizes in high-grading logging operations.

Not all high-grading operations pertained to timber trees. In decades past, natural forests in tropical areas were exploited for such things as natural rubber (from the occasional *Ficus elastica* tree), and aromatic oils from sandalwood species of the genus *Santalum* that have a longer history of exploitative harvesting. Needless to say, forest dwellers have long harvested nuts and several kinds of tropical fruits from deep within natural forests. To say that there still are virgin forests, despite the seeming remoteness and fully stocked appearance of primary forests, is debatable. But for the most part, high-grading—past and present, has concentrated on commercially valuable species of timber trees, a few of which are household words. Teak, mahogany, ebony,

walnut, and redwood are a few examples. In Central America and South America, in general, the over-exploitation of mahogany trees led to a depletion of growing stock so severe that in some places restrictions were placed on the logging of mahogany.

There are a few references in Maya Empire history to suggest that Maya emperors favored certain species for their pet construction projects. Perhaps it had to do with the favored color of the heartwood, or the need to have large dimensions to accomplish the projects. The subject matter leaves a lot of room for speculation. At some point, there is also the issue of the choice of species that possess the working qualities and aesthetic appeal that become the primary factors for which some species were favored, in other places and in other cultures. Appropriate size, desired working qualities, and aesthetic appeal are all attributes that presumably pertained to species that were high-graded everywhere. Those attributes and widespread appeal still pertain to societies everywhere. They influence contemporary forestry practices. Loggers still salivate when they have a potential trophy in sight and is duly marked for cut with the tree paint of admissibility. Single tree selection, or high-grading lite in regulated forests; and illegal logging and timber piracy in places where regulations are lacking or where corruption abounds. A few countries come to mind: Congo, Madagascar, and others; but this chronicle is not intended to level charges, only to note that high-grading and illegal logging go hand in hand because the payoff seems to influence the temptations.

Laymen should not get the idea that single tree selection favors only potential trophy trees of large size. Responsible foresters and land managers who are tasked with good land stewardship practices have a self-imposed obligation to improve the residual forest by marking for cut a certain number of diseased and dying trees as well as healthy but overmature trees. If there is a healthy, large tree in the mix, all well and good. Getting a good balance between promoting augmented growth of the residual stand, and systematically reducing or eliminating diseased and inferior trees is part and parcel of the art of forest management. Trees are, after all, among nature's most readily renewable resources.



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Memes That Miss The Mark

These days it is ever so common to see memes posted on social media sites, that we are lulled into thinking that we are seeing pearls of wisdom. In addition, it is also very easy to create and post our own memes that attract readers by virtue of their flashy colors and bold fonts. Good memes with thoughtful themes and enduring truisms are helpful inspirations, but too many memes that grace the pages of social media sites are ill-conceived and do not carry messages that inspire. Too many are delusional scraps of nonsense.

If it were just a matter of scrolling past the memes that really don't project worldly truths before moving on to other things, those of us who try to use critical thinking are not sharing insights that might have value to others. Of course, there are degrees of truth that could apply to memes, so one should neither immediately embrace them at face value nor reject them outright if there are some redeeming aspects to them. It would be helpful to display a few memes to make the point more clearly.

If it seems that the **Footloose Forester** is just a contrarian who finds fault with everything, you would be playing into his opening for the riposte that there is a difference between being critical and exhibiting critical thinking. Inasmuch as the **Footloose Forester** is a fan of many of the Greek, Roman, and Chinese philosophers whose memorable quotes may have been converted into memes, he realizes that not all that passed their lips one day became immortal quotations that transcended time. So it is that he is hesitant to accept at face value the implied wisdom of many modern day quotes that turn up in fancily adorned memes.

Without the intricate framing of the square meme box, the **Footloose Forester** readily accepts the wisdom of:

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY
A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE
TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE

but rejects out of hand many of the recently published memes he saw on the Internet.

The odds that the admonition in many memes are true are so low that it would be a waste of time to try to disprove the presumption that, for example, *the nearest book contains a description of your life*, to be found, magically, on page 45. Thanks to **memes.com** for introducing us to a clever new click-bait gambit. **Eatliver.com** also shares in making up bogus wisdom sharing games. Perhaps they thought that the wisdom of the

ancients is too passé for boomers and millennials. You have to enlarge the picture above to read the fine print, but their domain names are there.

There are many other ostensibly inspirational memes out there that presume to elevate and enlighten us. Methinks that there is a profit motive in the mix, with points and incentives going to those who create and those who share, kind of like a modern-day chain letter. Yours truly is guilty of reading through more than his share of clickbait memes. He is still seeking wisdom but more frequently these days he is seeing drivel.

Speaking of drivel, we are bombarded by thoughtless political memes that put irrelevant ideas into our heads. At one time it was fun to refer to them as dumb memes, in non-political issues. These days it seems that we can't keep politics out of anything.

For the record, more than a few of us don't want to be defenseless but the issue should never be broached by a nameless meme maker who paints protesting students as perpetrators of mass rebellion. How do we know what is a valid argument, and what is not? We can start by listening to their words, not by nodding in agreement to a proposition that has no basis in stated fact.

Who are the anonymous meme makers and what do they want to achieve?

Going back hundreds and even thousands of years to re-discover timeless truisms, worldly wisdom, and profound quotations, there has always been a small and dedicated cabal of devotees. These days, however; meme makers are taking center stage as they repackage and repurpose both the profound and the putrid. It is hard to look away from the glitzy frames and stark colors used to dress up the room where modern-day epistles are ever-so-easy to write. As Marshall McLuhan famously pronounced to his acolytes, "the medium is the message."

Unfortunately, the fancy frames, the filigree, the tactical shading, and other visual eye candy of the basic meme information box too often gets filled up with putrid trash that should bring discredit on the meme makers, themselves. But who are these meme makers, especially those whose few words of outrageously false propaganda is usually cloaked in the secrecy of their names, affiliations, and production headquarters? In the good old days, a memorable quotation that was shared in print usually included the name and historical reference to the approximate time period. These days the anonymous meme makers feel emboldened to publish the most egregiously baseless trash, partly because they know that they may not be held accountable for a single word, never mind the veracity of the explosive topics they choose. Political memes, above all, stretch credulously to the limit.

The political proclivities of the **Footloose Forester** are not the issue here, but seeking factual substantiation for familiar talking points is. Hence, a recent undated and anonymous meme as shown below

Who do we challenge when we wish to challenge the factual content of anonymous memes? Meme makers have a nice gig going and probably earn a lot of attention. Reasonable people will scoff at such rubbish, but they will react, whether with a laugh or a sense of approval. Few people will, however; question whether or not ubiquitous political memes really hit the mark.



Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

The Healthcare Lifeboat

When does a chronicle belong in the Ancestors portfolio? Where does a story about Education belong? Who should be the general audience for a personal legacy tale about Growing Up Years? Obvious humor belongs in the Humor portfolio and a strange coincidence may find itself consigned to the Coincidence portfolio without objections, but some chronicles remain unassigned because they might logically fall into several categories. Writers of legacy stories have to decide where to assign their missives so that they will attract the audience for which they were intended.

Librarians know that modern cataloguing procedures have specific indicators that form the framework of the worldwide standard Dewey Decimal System. If one knows the system well enough, it saves time when searching the stacks of major libraries--on foot. Of course, the card catalogue in the main lobby also contains other information about published works found within the walls of the library, to aid those who are armed with only fragmented or limited knowledge about a particular author, subject, or field of literature. The point is, if you know what you are looking for and you know where to look, a diligent search will usually turn up what is available. When the search is for Moby Dick, getting your hands on a copy of Moby Dick is not much of a problem. But when getting a definitive answer to something ethereal like the factual basis for a Supreme Being, you can expect to find a wide range of reference materials but none of which perfectly complements the tenets of any singular belief system. Such is the nature of the implicit intellectual dialogue that has persisted ever since libraries were organized to invite learning through sharing their treasures. They collect and catalogue information, we read and decide on the merits of that collective information.

When it comes to modern politics, information collection and sharing is far easier to accomplish, and dissemination can be world-wide in a matter of minutes. That makes the importance of physical conduits stand out as essential to getting any manner of talking points to take hold among those on the receiving end of the process. Knowing what is going on is fundamental, but if the talking points being proffered are themselves faulty, ill-conceived or inadequately considered, the loyal supporters will be misinformed and the body of natural political opponents are burdened with the need to counter the messages in the talking points. As dreadful and as polarizing as the discussion of politics has become in recent decades, it is still necessary to separate out fact from fiction. In politics today, there are far too many specious policies, proposals, and fantasies that are being foisted upon the electorate without the benefit of reasonable analysis. One side pronounces and strongly promotes one point of view; and the other side may or may not counter with an opposing point of

view. The whole process produces confusion. Although there should be no confusion about the operational results of those policies, some politicians are counting on confusion as part of the strategy in gaining adherents. Only an informed electorate is in a position to distinguish fact from fiction. And it usually takes looking at both sides of the coin.

This chronicle began as an attempt to address the national health care system from a personal point of view and then using a bit of humor to justify putting the story in the Humor portfolio. The problem is, the subject of healthcare is not really a laughing matter; and I would not like to see the story itself directed to and then deposited only in the Humor portfolio. The use of tags helps to categorize the subject matter, and as many people are aware, the use of tags as useful identifiers helps in the cross-referencing of similar materials. Tags as valuable as sub-title identifiers, as it were, but they are not foolproof. Thus, even choosing the appropriate tags to use has its uncertainties.

Late-night comics often make fun of pronouncements coming out of Washington, D.C. If viewers laugh at the comedians' take on certain statements made by politicians of any stripe, it may be because so many of the things said are so laughable. Hence the propensity to employ humor as a way to get people's attention, and by extension the legitimacy of a Humor category for archiving my own *Chronicles of a Footloose Forester*. It would be a shame if a tag as sub-title identity aid did not lead to other appropriate categories, or anywhere at all. Without further waffling, the perceived scenario, as parody, gets back to the message in the title of this chronicle.

The **Footloose Forester**, afloat in a dream about what a national healthcare program is all about, sees it this way:

ObamaCare is a leaky boat that was shoddily constructed by a combination of skilled and unskilled workers who individually or collectively decided that it would float and furthermore, it would keep the passengers afloat without the fear of drowning. The Democrats, by and large, were responsible for building and funding it in the hopes that the holes in the bottom of the boat could be plugged.

Then along came the Republicans who threatened to scuttle ObamaCare and replace it with something terrific. For years they boasted that they had something better, but never came forth with the details of superior boatbuilding acumen. Fast forward to 2017 and the current state of affairs. The ObamaCare boat is still afloat but under imminent threat of being torpedoed by a Republican-controlled Congress and a so-called president who does not understand health care issues to the extent of convincing anybody that his proposals would hold water (pun definitely intended). What is laughable about the current situation is: he just lately proposed to repeal ObamaCare now and replace it later. Scuttle the boat with millions of passengers in it now, and build another healthcare lifeboat later. In the meantime, many of the erstwhile passengers will drown, some will try to tread water, others will try to swim to shore, and still others will avoid climbing into the next boat, yet to be designed, built or given its maiden voyage.

Most readers of these chronicles know by now that there are frequent updates because the situation in politics begs for currently relevant information. Thus, it may be informative to add to the laughable aspects of our American healthcare situation, as seen through the eyes of a would-be humorist. Now that the GOP-controlled Senate voted not to let the ObamaCare lifeboat sink without the prospects of having another boat at anchor, waiting to take on the passengers in danger of drowning, they took the next step. That step was a vote to allow the ObamaCare lifeboat to remain afloat, but to toss some of the passengers overboard. That vote was also

defeated. Next comes a presumed vote to save everybody by crafting another rescue plan. That plan is presently in the works, but nobody is saying much about it. All we know, we lowly members of the proletariat, is that it may not involve a bigger and better boat. Reliable sources tell me that there is NO BOAT, just promises of rescue. Finally, our Commander-in-Chief who looks after the health and welfare of his fellow Americans recently pronounced, "Let ObamaCare implode." That should settle matters. A calculated and deliberate way to scuttle the ObamaCare lifeboat without the need for contingency plans. Why didn't Congress think of that before?

The unrepresented (sic.) proposals of our so-called president are so laughable that **Footloose Forester** was inclined to include this chronicle in his Humor portfolio. But he hopes that nobody mistakes a comedic parody as a trifling attempt to make light of a serious national priority for most Americans.

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

Kompromat

One of the reasons why the **Footloose Forester** uses a masthead with a heading that includes the key words: Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams is because his self-awareness tells him that in his desire to put into print some of the things that swirl around in his brain and that he would like to share with others, most ideas do--in fact, fall into categories that might best be described as essays, stories, adventures, or dreams.

His chronicles are not planned; thus, any subsequent story might be about a real adventure, an especially vivid dream, an interesting but happenstance story about people, places, or things, or an essay that has been festering like a carbuncle that is about to burst. He doesn't know what will come next, such is the nature of writing in the stream of consciousness mode. And it doesn't matter. Getting something off his chest, or out of his system, is cathartic in itself. But it does not mean that the subject matter will be disposed of like a plastic bag full of donated personal clothing. Ideas that are personal and fondly regarded like personal items of clothing can be contributed; to persons perhaps unknown and who may never acknowledge what the ideas mean to them. The gesture is, nevertheless; an act of sharing.

The memories of adventures will always be there and the convictions that go into essays do not go away. One thing about essays is the comforting knowledge that although others may disagree with the message in the essays, they know that essays are the work of individuals with opinions about things. Hence, the **Footloose Forester** feels unburdened in writing essays, from time to time, even about political topics that may or may not have supporters. And it doesn't matter if no one thinks the same thoughts or agrees with the context of the essays. The essays of the **Footloose Forester** are created in response to conscious and subconscious impulses to lock away his own beliefs and opinions into archives that, in turn, should be open to scrutiny, to challenge, and to his own review at future moments of examination of conscience. In other words, he should not be afraid to check on the durability of his own opinions, when viewed in retrospect or in an open forum.

The uncomfortable segue into the subject matter of this chronicle is all about that carbuncle of indignation that signals that an essay may be on the way. If and when it is shared with others is secondary in the psyche of the **Footloose Forester**; his first impulse is to express his thoughts in writing, the mode most amenable to contemplation, review, correction, and update.

This controversial chronicle is about the Kompromat of the President of the United States. As they sometimes say in syndicated newspapers regarding contributed editorials: the views expressed are not necessarily those of the publisher and its staff but is the sole viewpoint of the author. So, here it comes—the viewpoint of the **Footloose Forester**.

Our elected American president has been compromised by the Russian government for many years. He was surveilled by Russian intelligence services many years ago as the type of high-profile individual who would be a good candidate for being compromised, precisely because he has many of the characteristics that can be compromised. He was vain, narcissistic, well-known, in need of being propped up financially, and he had the ear of many American politicians. The Kompromat on our so-called Commander-in-Chief was assembled decades ago, in Russia. Our Narcissist-in-Chief made it easy by visiting Russia several times before he was elected and by developing personal ties with a few people who we now know were agents of the Russian government or powerful oligarchs who themselves had the ears of key members in the Kremlin. The Donald being comprised by others continues apace and the dossier of Kompromat continues to grow.

The eventual history of the rise and fall of the compromised Useful Idiot in the White House will elaborate the nature and utility of the Kompromat that led him to accept (probably) laundered money to fund the building of his casinos, golf courses, and hotels. More recently, he sought to obtain financing from VTB Bank, a Russian state bank that has been sanctioned in the United States for past episodes of money laundering. They were willing to put up about a billion dollars (it has been reported) to build his cherished trump Tower in Moscow. As regards his personal business dealings as they intersected with political campaign ethics, he hid or forgot to mention to the voting public that such shady business dealing violates the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, or that his involvement as a signatory to the Moscow Project agreement was part of his collusion with the Russians. For the record, The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977, as amended, 15 U.S.C. §§ 78dd-1, et seq. (“FCPA”), was enacted for the purpose of making it unlawful for certain classes of persons and entities to make payments to foreign government officials to assist in obtaining or retaining business.

Conspiracy to collude with corrupt intent is still collusion and it is still conspiracy. More to the point, an offer to gift Vladimir Putin with a \$50 million-dollar penthouse as part of the Moscow hotel deal can also be seen as a bribe and one more aspect of his complex quid pro quo with Putin. By the way, few of the anti-trump resistors refer to his dealings with the Russians as quid pro quo, in whole or in part. At this stage, it is still speculation on the part of the Footloose Forester, but he is unabashedly willing to speculate in these personal chronicles what the grand quid pro quo might contain.

Making public the dirty money transactions from the past is one aspect that con artist trump wants to keep from the public. There are after all, bank records that can be summoned. His sexual escapades may have been recorded by those who specialize in assembling Kompromat dossiers. His secret meetings with Putin after the election of 2016 probably contain tainted deals that he would not like others to know about. Again, for the record, his hour-long tête-a-tête with Putin at the G20 meeting in Hamburg, Germany in 2017 was in private (only a Russian interpreter present) and there was no press release about what they discussed. His private meeting with Putin in Helsinki the following year was also kept from public disclosure. Perhaps those gestures were testing the quid pro quo. But what did the Russians want in return?

The whole world knows that the Russian State had been sanctioned by President Obama after Russia invaded the Ukraine and annexed Crimea. The Obama Administration ordered dozens of diplomats expelled and two Russian owned properties closed. The Russians wanted those properties back. They are part of the quid pro quo.

Former National Security Advisor Michael T. Flynn was fired by the White House because he was caught lying about lifting sanctions on Russia. What sanctions? Perhaps a UN-mandated sanction against Russia being permitted to sell oil on the open market, as punishment for their invasion of Ukraine. In essence, Flynn told the Russians before the presidential election not to retaliate against the United States because if Don the Con were elected, he would work to have the sanctions lifted. It was one item in the grand quid pro quo. The general public now knows that the newly elected president did try and have the sanctions lifted shortly after he was elected. The US Congress blocked those attempts; instead they imposed more sanctions on Russia.

Another item in the list of negotiables in the grand quid pro quo was an attempt by Russia to seek repeal of The Magnitsky Act, formally known as the Russia and Moldova Jackson–Vanik Repeal and Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012, a bipartisan bill passed by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by President Barack Obama in December 2012. Its intent was to punish Russian officials responsible for the death of Russian tax accountant Sergei Magnitsky in a Moscow prison in 2009. That was the main agenda at the infamous trump Tower meeting with Russian officials and members of the president's campaign staff. That set of sanctions was directed at several Russian oligarchs who had financial interests in the United States and some of whom owned real estate in trump Towers in New York City. Our duplicitous president at first tried to hide details about the meeting and later concocted a phony cover story. The oligarchs wanted free access to their financial resources which included five known purchases of apartments in trump Towers, overpriced and probably paid for with laundered money. Real estate, by the way, is one of the major sinkholes of laundered money and it has been reported that some 63 trump properties in New York and in Florida were sold to Russians.

On the opposite side of the quid pro quo, the Russians were offering dirt on Hillary Clinton, the political opponent of Crooked Donald. The collusion was later reported to be an insignificant meeting with no meaningful follow-up. Does anybody believe that? One former trump Chief of Staff called the investigation a nothing burger. The Russian hacking of the 2016 elections and the elevation of Crooked Donald to the presidency is now a dark period in American history. But the story of the grand quid pro quo and the Kompromat that fueled it, has yet to be told.

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

Speedy's Lost & Found

The **Chronicles of a Footloose Forester** are true stories about a gadabout adventurer who, for lack of steady employment of his choosing at a time or in a place to his liking, was on the road...again!!! and again!!! more often than most other restless souls that he knew.

He had wanted to devote his career as a public service dirt forester in the wilds of America's vast national forests, but never won a Civil Service appointment that was the prescribed path to such a career; and for which he had spent many years in college. Rather than investing all of his hopes in a system that never acknowledged his qualifications (he was on the Civil Service list of qualified applicants for all of 12 years); he sometimes settled for being gainfully employed in circumstances where the job openings and work requirements at least matched his skills and personal attitude towards the kind of work being offered. Thus, his dozens and dozens of jobs over a period of 60 years in the workforce included part-time work, hourly wages, salaried positions, personal services contracts, paid consultancies, short-term and long-term assignments in foreign countries; and unpaid, voluntary participation in projects and programs. Even the latter involved isolation, inconvenience, much sweat, long hours and physical endurance. But the **Footloose Forester** believed that the world did not owe him a thing, and was willing to do an honest day's work at most any job that gave him personal satisfaction in the doing.

All of the preceding background information of this Chronicle entry is provided merely to put a proper context to the story, itself. The **Footloose Forester** bounced from high paying jobs to low paying ones, with full knowledge that professional stature was not something he would ever see as affecting his pay grade.

In the manner of a historical novel that is based on actual events in the past, but with fictional characters inserted as the storytellers, this Chronicle entry uses fictitious places and names for the purpose of protecting the innocent and deflecting aspersions from others, who, although they may have been guilty of shady activity, were not in the crosshairs of the **Footloose Forester**. Retribution was never his job.

Two previous Chronicle stories about Speedy Rent-a-Car have already been published, such were the shocking revelations about how loosely managed that fictitious car rental agency really was. This entry would seem to make the series into a trilogy; under the category of *Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction*.

Going back to the time when the **Footloose Forester** was a driver for Speedy Rent-a-Car in Pawtucket, Wisconsin, he was always irritated when Speedy employees did not seem to be much interested in providing good customer service. It was especially mortifying when senior management did not recognize the weaknesses in how a few of its operations were run. The point of this story is how Speedy Rent-a-Car operated its Lost & Found Department.

Nobody wanted to be charged with running the Lost & Found Department because it was a time-consuming function that did not contribute to the bottom line. It required an information collecting phase on the part of the person finding the lost item(s); it involved recording the time, date and particulars about where the items were found; in making a side trip to the office where the items were deposited, and then were logged into a special book. Finally, the lost items were stored in bins, pending the return of the items to their rightful owners. Most times, however, the renter realized his/her loss before their plane took off; and arranged to have the item retrieved from a large desk in the office where it was in clear sight, prior to going into a storage bin.

Most of the time, items that went missing were left in rental cars upon completion of a renter's contract. Thus, they were usually missing items, not really lost items. But Speedy Rent-a-Car had an unspoken obligation to serve the customer, even if it meant contacting them in another city about a "lost" item that was left in a returned rental car. At a minimum, the rightful owner was contacted by phone about the item(s) left in the car; and that is where accurate information about the time, date and kind of car came into play. Without the finders of lost items doing what was necessary in the way of recording the details, the chances of renters recovering their lost items was somewhat diminished.

In the event that telephonic contact was not successful, Speedy Rent-a-Car followed up with a letter or postcard to the renter regarding the fact that an (unidentified) item was found in a returned car. If the renter wanted the item back, they had to explain the circumstances whereby an item was left in a car, and possibly identify what the item was. The process was, therefore, not an open-and-shut case of making a claim on the basis of the dialogue between the renter and Speedy Rent-a-Car. Very often the renter or the car was the driver who was unaware that a relative or child in the back seat had discovered something was missing when they got home from a trip. Thus, more headaches for the person responsible for operating the Lost & Found Department.

When the item left in a rental car was an umbrella, for example; the renter sometimes declined to claim it, due to its nominal value. But when an expensive diamond studded tie clasp with sentimental value was discovered on the floor mat in the back seat area, that renter tended to show some anguish, then relief when the item was returned. On the other hand, the many stuffed bins in the Speedy Lost & Found Department contained hundreds, perhaps thousands of items that somehow went unclaimed. If the process of making a claim seemed like it was always going to be hit-or-miss, it was because the communications and correspondence links were so often ineffective. Thus, the inventory of unclaimed items had to be cataloged by month and by year, the better to locate an overlooked item of value that the renter did not originally discover as missing.

One of the revealing aspects of the whole lost and found operation at Speedy Rent-a-Car was the personal stake that Speedy employees had in NOT doing a proper job at reporting a lost item; nor in properly recording the details. If and when the renter did not claim a lost item within 90 days, according to Speedy Rent-a-Car management rules, the employee making the discovery of a lost item was entitled to claim it for himself. What a great temptation to report a lost item with insufficient or bogus information; or not to make a report of a lost item, in the first place. It was easy to ignore the renters, most of whom we never laid eyes on or would ever

meet face to face. Integrity was called for at every stage, but too many people at Speedy Rent-a-Car ignored that moral imperative in favor of their own greedy impulses.

In the interests of full disclosure, the **Footloose Forester** will be the first to admit that during the years when he was a driver at Speedy Rent-a-Car in Pawtuckett, Wisconsin, he benefitted in spades with dozens of unclaimed items from the Lost & Found Department.

Sunglasses and umbrellas were the most common items checked into Lost & Found; and unless the sunglasses were known to have prescription lenses, even Speedy Rent-a-Car management did not bother to write or call the renters about them. They also let it slip out to their employees that they didn't much care if an employee didn't report sunglasses left in a car. In the case of umbrellas, it was company policy to ignore the procedure of being proactive about calling or writing the renter about them. Of course, if the renter called us, they got their items back without hesitation. The operation was, nonetheless, a losing proposition that did not add to the bottom line, and could be contentious at any step in the process.

Thus it was that the **Footloose Forester** carried home dozens of unclaimed sunglasses and umbrellas. On one trip to Viet Nam, he packed 16 umbrellas that he then gave away to people who could use them. Same thing with sunglasses; his horde of 60 pairs of sunglasses would serve him personally for years to come, and he gave away dozens along the way. Unclaimed articles of clothing he would take to Good Will Industries and deposit them into bins that accepted used clothing. The ball point pens taken from hotel and motel rooms and then left in Speedy rental cars were gathered up, bound into bundles of 50-60, and donated to the local food bank. Bundles of pens also went into his suitcase to give away in Viet Nam.

It was serendipitously easy to also benefit personally with valuables from Lost & Found, simply by following the rules. Those rules for reporting lost items were intended to facilitate the prompt return of lost items; and most often resulted in the renter recovering an item that was important to them alone, such as a garage door opener.

A typical garage door opener did not look valuable but when it went missing, there was cause for concern among the families whose homes then became vulnerable to any unprincipled and unscrupulous finders who knew that a coded garage door opener is as good as a house key. Needless to say, some of those same employee/finders had access to the address of the renter who lost it. And that is why the **Footloose Forester** became anguished when one of several drivers did not follow the rules for reporting lost items; or if the finders did not provide enough detail about where and when such an item was found in a returned car.

It also didn't help when the newest Speedy Rent-a-Car clerk charged with managing the Lost & Found system tossed out two different reports about two lost garage door openers submitted by the **Footloose Forester** on the same day. When he saw the items on her desk, but without the brief reports with the details about the proper owners, he inquired about what had happened to the report slips. She denied that any reports had been made. Later on, and after she had gone home from work, the **Footloose Forester** fished both reports from her waste basket.

That was one of those times when **Footloose Forester** was obliged to inform a manager that she was probably unsuited to undertake the task of managing the Lost & Found Department. Not only did she throw away the report slips written in the hand of the **Footloose Forester**; and then lied about it, but she entered incomplete information into the official log book intended to keep track of Lost & Found items for long periods of time.

Yes, mention of the items was recorded, but without the identification of the car, the name and address of the renter, and other details. And since she thought she would escape scrutiny, she put that information into the log book on the following day, but only after she was confronted by a manager. Since the **Footloose Forester** made copies of all his own report slips and had kept the report slips that he had retrieved from the waste basket the previous day, she could not make a convincing case regarding her procedures. And she couldn't lie her way past the manager, thus soon she became an ex-employee of Speedy Rent-a-Car.

Truth is stranger than fiction, thus the tales of the Lost & Found Department at Speedy Rent-a-Car makes the case for a compelling historical novelette. But the young girl who took the easy way out of her duties as manager of the Lost & Found Department was not the worst offender.

That shameful title goes to a slightly older married lady whose good looks and sex appeal probably emboldened her to do things the way she wanted. It emboldened her when she was tasked to manage the Lost & Found Department and discovered a way to enrich herself and get away with it for more than a year. Instead of recording the name and employee number of the person who found a lost item in a car, she entered her own name as the finder—of everything. And because she had access to the time, date, name and address of the renter from the Lost & Found slips, she could answer all the questions when it came to contacting renters who had left items in their rental cars.

She was usually alone in one part of the office, so could easily conceal what she was doing. The person dropping off the lost item stayed only a minute or less in the office, so she could decide what action she was going to take....and whether or not she was going to help herself to someone's property. A pretty severe accusation? Yes. Since he kept duplicates of the Lost & Found slips he submitted because he did not trust her, the **Footloose Forester** had enough evidence of her nefarious ways. On the other hand, nobody appointed the **Footloose Forester** as an investigator.

Once, the **Footloose Forester** found that a renter, apparently in a hurry to catch a plane, had left a large case full of compact disks with recorded music in the back seat of his rental car. There were so many CDs that the **Footloose Forester** decided to count them and make that information as part of his Lost & Found report. Forty-three CDs as part of the renters' luggage is not something to be overlooked. Miss Pretty Eyes was on duty when he came into the office with the case of 43 CDs. He submitted his Lost & Found report, left the case of CDs on her desk and returned to work outside. At the end of the workday and after Miss Pretty Eyes had gone home, there was no entry in the log book about 43 lost CDs, no case of CDs on her desk, and no evidence in the storage room that such a conspicuous item was present. She probably took them home, but she was not talking and none of the several managers at Speedy ever pinned it on her.

Only after another driver at Speedy Rent-a-Car complained that, for more than a year after she came to work, nobody else had received unclaimed items that they themselves had turned in and had remembered. In former times, nearly everyone had found lost items from time to time, so we were aware that two or three times a year the city manager would turn over the inventory of tagged and untagged items from the storage bins and put them on display in the meeting room. That is when the scheme of Miss Pretty Eyes began to unravel. But only after the managers inspected the Lost & Found log book in which she claimed to have found everything (by ignoring those who submitted lost item reports), was she on her way out. In the long interim until she was exposed, one can only imagine how many items she decided to take home with her.



Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
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By Dick Pellek

How Google Earth Brings The World To Your Computer

E-Mail Notes To A Friend

Dear John, On the stimulus of a single beer, I am entering into an ethereal high. So, let me proceed.... Google Earth is so powerful that I have been able to revisit the exact path to the top of Mt. Whitney, even after 50 years; and to properly identify the trail we took to the top of Kilimanjaro. If someone asks, you will be able to draw a red line from the bunkhouse to the outhouse, at 16,500 feet of elevation.

There are a dozen stick pins on the maps in my files; to help explain about the places where we lived, worked and did field projects. The red line trails through the jungle in Indonesia are important because it is insufficient to try to describe them without some way to trace them as they wander here and there. There are historical archives so you will be able to see before-after photos. There are hundreds of places I want to visit on Google Earth; and places I want to revisit.

When you have Google Earth installed, we will be able to exchange photos of anyplace, at all. When you are up to speed, I'll guide you on a street level tour of Honolulu, including a 360 degree pan of all the places that have the camera files. That includes seeing the cute tourists in shorts and wearing Hollywood sunglasses. No joke! Finally, if you like, we can use latitude and longitude coordinates to start a street view tour.

On the other hand, the competitors in the computer mapping game have made great strides. When I searched through Bing.com maps the other day, I was able to see the spot where I would like my ashes to be spread, then to pan in any direction. That was when I confirmed for a third time, that the trail up the face of the Grey Wall is the best one to take to get to Lake Aloha. As far as I know, the Bing maps do not require Google Earth, but the coverage does not extend to other countries with the same depth of options. Getting back to Google Earth, if you have a joystick you will be able to fly from one destination to another much quicker. That includes being able to land at the local airport. Of course, you have to decrease your speed and use flaps to land without crashing.

Now, for that second beer so I can continue to fly. Oh, I might have mentioned that with Google Earth and a joystick you will be able to launch a paraglider from the rim of a volcano in Cape Verde and land on the

beach a few miles away. Of course it will be a simulator but guess who invented the simulators and put in the parameters? Pilots...and they say that modern computer flight simulators are very close to the real thing--minus the queasy stomachs.

When you ask for hints, I tend to take it as a challenge. Since I think that Google Earth is such a powerful tool, I am more than happy to suggest hints. First off, I think that transmission of Kml files (eg.,kml file extension type) is not automatic but Google accepts that type of file with their suite of software products. So I think that it is necessary to have Google Earth installed in order to read the Kml files that are sent. On the other hand, I know that when you have a map scene that you want to save, you have the option to save the scene in JPG format. With this email, I am attempting to send you a map scene that I did save in JPG format. It was captured in Google Earth and saved in JPG format, in addition to the default Kml file format.

The other issue is the choice of email programs. My old faithful Netscape works almost every time with attachments, so this one is being initiated in Netscape and the file I want to attach is from my hard drive. As good as Google Earth is, the Gmail has a few problems. As it turned out, the info you got was transmitted by Gmail--by default, so I had no control over the problem with attachments.

So here is a .kml scene of our house in Pennsylvania. Next time, you can send me a scene of your new house, unless I beat you to it. One other thing, if you zoom into my street address with your new Google Earth software, disregard the white car in the driveway. That was our old one, proving that Google Earth indeed does use satellite photos that may be out of date, but are still useful.

Cheers, DikDik



Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

Google Earth Comes Of Age

Storytelling skills evolve with the storyteller. Not that the story changes, if the storyteller is honest and sincere, but the details that were forgotten or unavailable the first few times around finally get included to the satisfaction of the storyteller. Some of the most satisfactory episodes of storytelling by the peripatetic **Footloose Forester** have been based on adventures that have been embellished with geospatial evidence to demonstrate just where and when certain events took place. Google Earth and its numerous upgrades over the years has been a powerful tool in his personal portfolio of stories to illustrate the places, and as the stories flesh out the events that took place there.

Previous chronicles that mentioned Google Earth as a storytelling tool and visual way to share information like pointing to a car in a driveway by zooming in from space with satellite photos, also urged readers to use spatial references like geographic coordinates to help tell and share stories with others. These days, the technology is better than ever. The 2017 version of Google Earth is even better than expected, with a handy toggle to alternate scenes with 2-D and 3-D perspectives. And thanks to Google Earth for waiving their erstwhile copyright rules late in 2015, we are encouraged to share Google satellite photos and maps with others. Serious storytellers are bound to become better tellers of tales when pictures in stories are part of the finished products.

With the aid of computer-based maps and Google Earth precision in locating objects on the ground with high-resolution images, time and distance are no longer limiting factors in seeing and understanding more about geospatial scenarios. And flying to any destination with the embedded flight simulator in Google Earth makes the journey back in time and in virtual space a practical demonstration of those scenarios. The places on the satellite photos are real. We merely become photo interpreters of those scenes.

The **Footloose Forester** had often wondered what developed in the remote watersheds where he worked as an ecological researcher during the development phases of reservoir construction projects in various places. Just this very day, he discovered major changes in the landscape in a remote area in Venezuela that he was not aware had taken place since 1982. Before-after time lapse satellite photography allowed him to revisit the Rio Caparo basin of the Cordillera Oriental in the southern part of the country, due south of Lake Maracaibo, where he participated in mapping the watershed in the pre-construction phase of reservoir impoundment.

Back in 1982, we researchers traveled by dugout canoe to the upper watershed beyond where the present day La Vuelta Dam holds back Rio Caparo in Merida State. The river was swift and treacherous during the rainy season but slowed so considerably during the dry season that at some places we had to get out of the canoe and push it beyond a few shallow places.



Proposed site of La Vuelta Dam in 1982

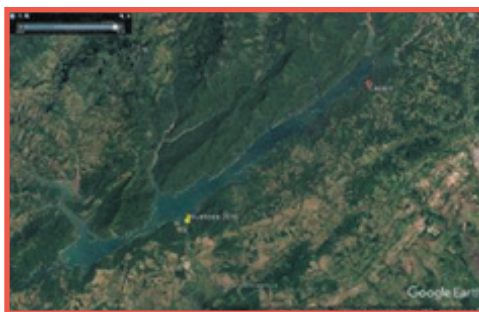
Between 1982 and 2001, preliminary dam construction work took place but there was no appreciable change in the overall landscape upstream because the filling of the reservoir behind the dam had not yet taken place. Then between 2001-2002, appreciable filling of the reservoir began to change the landscape of the watershed so dramatically that the changes were easy to see on Google Earth satellite photos. The suite of photographic evidence that focuses on the dam site and vicinity dates from 1969 and has been archived for convenient comparisons of changes.



By 2002 the Vuelta Dam had impounded the Rio Caparo

These days the impounded Rio Caparo is so wide and so deep that it backed up and eventually drowned the small village of Santa Maria de Caparo. Thanks to geospatial referencing, archaeologists can locate the site of the former village at Latitude 7°46'01.43" N and Longitude 71°28'00.13" W. It is now under water.

The photo showing the Embalse La Vuelta and stricture point where the dam was constructed can be seen in three dimensions in the 2017 version of Google Earth at Latitude 7° 45' 05.03" N and Longitude 71°27'53.72 W. At ground level, the hard rock structure of the terrain on the west flank obviates its choice as the site of the dam.



Vuelta and Rio Caparo Watershed in 2016

Among his favourite work sites and, by implication, some of his fondest memories were thousands of miles apart in terms of geography but closely linked in terms of photographic retrieval techniques built into computer programs. Only after 25 years did he first learn that the La Vuelta dam in Venezuela (at $N7^{\circ} 45' 6.14''$ and $W71^{\circ} 27' 55.45''$) had been constructed as planned; but it was not until 2017 that he came to realise how big the reservoir had become.

Because of the historical value of using before-after comparisons to evaluate changes in land use and alterations in the landscape, archived chronicles facilitate making comparisons of end-stage results of river impoundment for the purposes of creating reservoirs.

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

Taking A Little Tour By Satellite Photo

Let Me Take You On A Little Tour (in Google Earth)

Those with wanderlust in their blood often can be found in far flung places, living out their dreams. So it is that a restless forester, who chose a life that made the forest his office, sought out virgin forests and jungles whenever he could. His mother said that he had been born 100 years too late because the whole world had already been explored. True, to an extent, but the **Footloose Forester** was determined to seek out a few places where no footprints had ever been made. The jungles of Ujung Kulon at the western tip of Java fit the bill close enough. Blue ocean all around a few isolated islands of green made for stark contrasts in spatial encounters; and the area was all but uninhabited (Figure 1).

To get a better overview of the expanded area, however, it is preferable to use the interactive flight simulator in Google Earth to take a virtual flight. When you fly over the area it becomes obvious that, although it is lush, green and beautiful; there are few landmarks to go by.



The yellow stick pin points to the location of the research station from which the **Footloose Forester** set out each day to conduct his studies on the opposite shore. Getting there was by one-man boat; and although it was not far, by going alone, he always put himself in a situation by which he was isolated.

With the Google Earth program in your computer, you can expand the scene to show that all of the mainland to the east is as green and wild as the small island of Pulau Peucang where the living quarters were located. On the other hand, you can also zoom in to see how sparse the facilities are. Less than 20 people live on Pulau Peucang; and all of them are conservation officers and their families.

It might be better to choose another example that has lots of easily recognized landmarks; and plenty of history to boot. So, let's fly via Google Earth to another island off the coast of Senegal, in Africa (Figure 2).



In this case, the yellow stick pin shows the approximate location of the apartment where the **Footloose Forester** stayed with his wife when he was in the Dakar region during the two-year period when a team of environmentalists was conducting an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to improving economic conditions along the Senegal River. The costly study included several study trips upstream into Mauritania and Mali.

The Island of Goree is quiet and peaceful. Although it is situated about 3 miles east of the corniche landform where the bustling city of Dakar is located, the residents can easily get into the city by taking the ferry which runs on a reliable schedule.

A few historical facts about Goree tie it to events that most people can relate to. The popular movie, "The Guns of Navarone" was partially filmed at the SE tip of the island where black basalt palisades emerge from the water line to a plateau where coastal artillery gun emplacements installed by the Vichy Government of France fired on Allied ships during World War II. As regards the details of the deadly guns, they can be seen more clearly in several of the historical archived satellite photos taken of Goree.

Although the vertical palisades are difficult to see clearly, their exact position can be traced by following the dark string of color from the water line until it peters out. Google Earth has an option by which the viewer can choose the scenes that best highlight both the basalt palisades and the gun emplacement. For whatever reason, the 6 November 2003 photo suite of Goree shows the basaltic palisades in the best contrast. To see details up closer, choose the map coordinates 14° 39' 51.39" N; and 17° 23' 54.36" W; and zoom in to about 1340 feet camera elevation.

Goree is also the site of the infamous House of Slaves, used as a temporary trans-shipment point during the colonial period of active slave trade. Slaves bound for the New World passed through the Door of No Return, directly up the gangplank of docked slave ships, anchored hard to. The Island of Goree has been designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Notable visitors to Goree who stood in the Door of No Return included Nelson Mandela, the mother of President Jimmie Carter; and Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama.

By the way, the coastal guns situated on the highest overlook on Goree were probably the ones that sunk an American cruiser that is still visible on the ocean bottom, near the entrance to Goree harbor where the ferry boats docks to discharge and take on Goree residents who commute to the mainland of Senegal.



Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

Google Earth Gets Better And Better

This chronicle is a revised version of an earlier story about how important Google[®] Earth has been in not only finding things like a car in a driveway by zooming in from space with satellite photos, but also using spatial references to help tell and share stories with others. These days, the technology is better than ever. And thanks to Google Earth for waiving their erstwhile copyright rules, we are more encouraged to share Google satellite photos and maps with others. We are bound to become better storytellers because pictures in stories are part of the finished product.

If it is true that a picture is worth 10,000 words, then the potential catalog of satellite photos in anyone's archives will make travel stories more interesting. Unfortunately, our collective memories of most places are too dim to capture very many stories in detail; on the other hand, some places and some memories from around the world are so clear in our minds that we are able to reconstruct a few stories by reliving the travels, one trip at a time.

With the aid of the computer program called Google Earth, and sometimes flying to a destination with the embedded flight simulator, anyone should be able to tell a story or two in virtual space, by advancing the cursor from one place to another. In fact, one is able to begin a flight along a selected route and move in any direction, pause, look around, and then proceed. The places on the satellite photos are real. We merely become photo interpreters.

Creating an archive of personal photos is one thing, but adding computer generated photos of the surface of the earth is quite another task and may take us out of our comfort zone. It requires an interactive process that very few readers would relish doing on a routine basis. But just as photos from a camera are highly personal and might mean very little to others except for the picture taker, the associated satellite photos from past adventures of the **Footloose Forester** are highly prized.

One of his favorite applications is using the flight simulator in Google Earth to take virtual flights entirely around the symmetrical cones of volcanoes or to do virtual trekking in mountains he has known. For example, the satellite photos of the volcano named Volcan Izalco in El Salvador are so clear, that you can take a virtual flight completely around it and relate to the ground features as you fly along at the same altitude. Volcan Izalco can be found in the suite of Google Earth maps and photos at Latitude N13° 48' 46.66" and Longitude W89° 37' 51.24".

The particular suite of photos in the Izalco series that makes the virtual flight so real is helped and enhanced by the absence of cloud cover in the area; and the knowledge that the photo resolution in that particular suite is so precise that the viewer can spot exactly where the main trail leads to the top, and see the exact spot on the ground where two lonely pine trees are growing on an otherwise bald cinder cone. The photo below is Volcan Izalco. Putting a stick pin at the spot of the two pine trees will, however; require doing a little editing on the Google Earth satellite image. Fortunately, marking things on the ground and tracing the trails up and down mountains can be done with some patient effort.

If he had not first seen those small pine trees himself when he stood there more than a decade ago, the **Footloose Forester** would himself not relate to the exact spots on the photos. Since there is virtually no other vegetation on the slopes of Volcan Izalco, the presence of the two small pine trees raises a number of questions of ecological and botanical interest. It should be mentioned, however, that not all photo suites in Google Earth are so good. Persistent cloud cover in high mountains does not lend itself to clear photos; or to any photos, at all.

Another exercise with satellite photos in Google Earth is both a source of entertainment and a practical application of the many possibilities of high-resolution photos. As a sometime hang glider and/or paraglider pilot, the **Footloose Forester** confirmed for himself that it is possible to glide from the rim of another volcano in Cape Verde and land on a black sand beach a few miles away.

Hang glider or paraglider pilots know that it is easy enough to launch from a hillside almost anywhere, but having a flight plan that includes a safe landing place is crucial. The information found on the photo suite pertaining to the volcano called Fogo, on the island of the same name, lets you know at a glance the best place along the volcano's rim to launch; the data at the bottom of the photo tells you the starting altitude for the glide; shows you the best flight path, and the locations of any ground obstacles such as towers and telephone lines along that flight path. Such notes as part of the planning process are also essential, just in case the pilot loses too much altitude in flight. Whereas different hang glider models have different glide ratios (horizontal distance covered divided by altitude change) capabilities, it is vitally important to also know what flight paths would not be possible to use in reaching the beach or other safe landing areas. By the way, the terrain on the volcanic island of Fogo is so steep in most places, that flying a hang glider or paraglider, at all, is entirely ruled out because there are so few safe landing places.

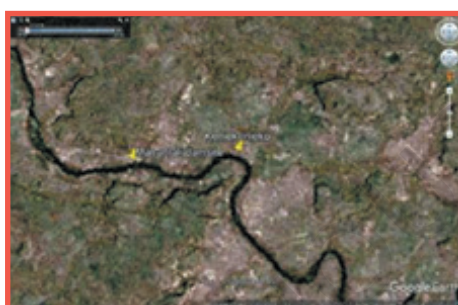
At this stage, anyone curious enough to check it out can confirm or dispute these assumptions by putting themselves on the rim of Fogo at Latitude N14° 56' 19.95" and Longitude W24° 26' 04.50". As enabled with inter-station dialogue via computer graphics, the possible collaboration between computer correspondents could also result in a better flight plan. The same principles apply when sharing tips on hiking trails or mountain climbing routes.

One of the most satisfying uses of satellite photos as archived by the technicians at Google Earth is the classical before-after comparison. **Footloose Forester** worked on a number of reservoir construction projects over the years, so was also curious to know how things worked out. In almost all instances his involvement was during the pre-construction phase and was concerned with potential environmental impacts if or when a dam site was constructed; and as the reservoir filled up behind the dam. Before-after is much easier to explain when there is photographic evidence to back it up. His 2010 memoirs *Afghanistan to Zambia: Chronicles of a Footloose Forester* has half a dozen geographical references to work sites in Mali, Senegal, Indonesia, Haiti,

Cape Verde, Venezuela, and elsewhere. The possibilities of comparing before-after conditions still exist; thus the geographical coordinates are essential tools in any present or future comparisons of circumstances on the ground.

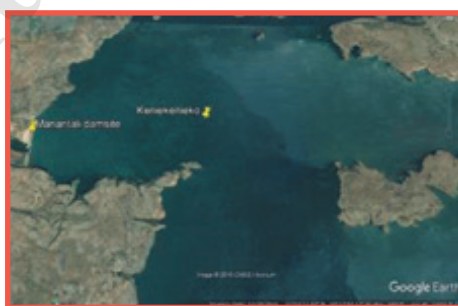
Among his favorite work sites and, by implication, some of his fondest memories were thousands of miles apart in terms of geography but closely linked in terms of photographic retrieval techniques built into computer programs. Only after 25 years did he learn that the La Veultosa dam in Venezuela (at N7° 45' 6.14" and W71° 27' 55.45") had been constructed as planned; and these days he can also see just how the Manantali Dam in Mali (at N13° 11' 48.12" and W10° 25' 45.33") looks in contrast to the surrounding desert.

In the first Google photo below, the site of the future Manantali Dam in Mali is marked with a yellow stick pin. The former site of the village of Kéniékéniéko is also shown. After the reservoir behind Manantali Dam was more or less full in 1987, the village of Kéniékéniéko disappeared under the water.



Manantali damsite and location of Kéniékéniéko in 1978

In the photo below, the dam and its associated structures had been completed by 1986. Kéniékéniéko is now underwater, one reason why knowing its former geographic coordinates is important. Scuba diving archeologists should look on maps at coordinates Latitude N13° 12.8' 20" and Longitude W10° 23' 06.33" to find the sunken village.



Lac Manantali and environs, after 1987



Stickpins show relative positions of 1975 campsite and desert airstrip

In the third satellite photo of the area adjacent to Manantali Dam, note the proximity of the abandoned airfield. It was a thrill to take off and land there in 1976-77 when we first camped right next to the spine of hard rock narrows that would henceforth be dammed up to become Lac Manantali. The landing procedure was to fly over the landing area and check the direction of the wind, have a local herder shoo the grazing animals away from the runway, have him unfurl the roll of toilet paper that the pilot tossed out of his side window and wait until it was hoisted on the wooden shaft used as a windsock. Doug Hudgins, the pilot, said that he made the flight the first time to prove he was a good pilot; and flew in the second time to prove that he was committed to the project, but he also said that he was not going to do it again to prove that he was crazy.

When the **Footloose Forester** once mentioned reliving the past a few meters at a time, he said so after virtual retracing his path on his way to the top of the Zugspitze, the highest mountain in Germany. Yes, virtually retracing his path by flying along the trail with the aid of the flight simulator sub-routine in Google Earth. The sharp stones are there, the shadows between opposing faces are there, the ridge lines are there, and the drop offs are there; all in archives that are so clear that it is easy to imagine being there again. By rotating the scenes you are able to look up, look down and see back along the route from whence you came. His personal archives contain a Google satellite photo that includes a route marked in red, his way to the top in 1962.

Of course, the **Footloose Forester** still pines for his boyhood days when he and his friends in Netcong, New Jersey played on top of huge glacially deposited boulders near his house. An archived Google Earth satellite photo taken prior to 2005 will show a few of them at N40° 53' 42.16" and W74° 42' 34.08" but subsequent photos show only a dozen or so boulders that were blasted, excavated and moved aside. Words alone are not sufficient to describe the circumstances of the before-after situation. The historical pictures taken from space satellites tell it better.

Finally, for anyone who might be curious to know where President John F. Kennedy was at noon on the day after his famous "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech in 1963, he was eating lunch at coordinates N50° 09' 40.91" and E8° 57' 54.55". We had steak followed by chocolate ice cream, at the US Army mess on Fliegerhorst Kaserne.



Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

Confessions of a Moseyier

It all started one morning when I was suspected of moseying on the job. I had never thought of myself as a moseyier, so it got me to thinking about moseying, in general. Is moseying a good thing or a bad thing? Can moseying become a habit? Or were some of us born as natural moseyiers? The answer to those questions and many others brings the subject of moseying into sharper focus. We should not take the subject lightly because how and when we mosey might make big differences in our lives.

There definitely are proper times and proper places to mosey. Nobody ever questions the cowboy in a third rate western movie who is seen moseying over to the saloon for a shot of red eye. Or the cowpoke who drops the shaft of straw from his mouth and moseyies over to the corral to check on the steers penned up there. Even cowgirls are known to mosey now and then, when all the chores are done and they are headed for the chuck house to wash up. But that is just the movie stereotype of moseying and moseyiers. There is plenty of moseying going on, in real life. Apparently, I am a practitioner.

Geographical Considerations

Moseying is perfectly acceptable anywhere in West Texas, especially when the moseyier is wearing western boots and a 10-gallon hat. In fact, moseying is acceptable social behavior anywhere in all the western states and in some parts of West Virginia. Moseying is always permissible within sight of a horse, even in New England states, but having a sprig of hay in one's mouth helps to identify the moseyier, just in case the horse is out of sight. There is no doubt that having the proper accouterments and fashionable moseying attire helps the otherwise uninformed in recognizing a practicing moseyier. That is not to say that accouterments and affectations will always point to a natural moseyier; there are plenty of phonies around. Fashion horses who believe that clothes make the man might also believe that wearing a wide belt with a big silver buckle also makes the moseyier of the moment.

Natural moseying can be expected in certain social groups; and might be an inherited trait, particularly among families who live in rural areas away from big city ways. Natural moseying presumably can be learned when growing up. Besides, there is plenty of straw one can grab when you are looking for stray doggies in the back forty. Innovative moseyiers substitute twigs from trees and bushes when there is snow on the ground.

There are lots of places where moseying is not acceptable. Moseying along to church services lacks decorum. No one should mosey off to fight a fire. And any thoughtful moseyer should give pause before moseying on down to the funeral parlor, even if you are wearing your best Stetson and your boots have a high shine. So it should have been no puzzle why, in my work uniform, and not having so much as a shaft of straw jutting from my jaw, there was a look of disapproval when I was first spotted moseying around in the parking garage. Out of place moseying... I should have considered that.

So, dear readers it is always incumbent upon the would-be moseyer to consider the possible consequences of the out-of-context and the ill-timed mosey. Perhaps it would be instructive to recall a few of the more important aspects of the history of moseying. Who were the first moseyers? Where did they practice their art? When did big-time moseying start to take off? And how did it find its way into cinema history and western lore? Finally, why is moseying acceptable among some cultural groups and scorned among others?

Moseying in History

First off, let us consider the etymology of the word “mosey” and its derivatives. In grammatical structure it is clear that the word mosey is only used as a verb and it can be diagramed to demonstrate that it is a regular verb of the active case and tense variety. That is to say, we can assign the pattern: I mosey, you mosey, he or she moseyies. But unlike some similar verbs like plow: I plow daily; you plow slowly; she plows neatly, we can never use a past predicate such as: the row was plowed in the morning. Saying she was moseyied just doesn’t make sense. So, all moseyers are acting in either the present, present perfect, or future perfect tenses; with a simple past tense construction.

Historical records do not indicate who the first known moseyers were, or where they developed their movements. Most likely, the first moseyers appeared at a time when hayseeds were abundant upon the land and they realized that the straws helped keep moisture in their mouths. Not all moseyers preferred straw, however. This moseyer has, for the past 50 years, preferred to stick a sprig of sweet clover in his mouth. When spring comes and until the vegetation turns dormant, this moseyer will even go out of his way to find clumps of clover and then select suitable stems. It may have something to do with a huge crush I had on a California girl named Clover, so many years ago.

So, back to reality. Early in the morning, without having so much as a sprig of clover or even a straw dangling out of my mouth, and not wearing either a wide belt with a silver buckle or western boots, I was detected from afar in a moseying mode; and in a place no respectful moseyer would be expected to be seen. It just goes to show you, you can take the moseyer out of the West, but you can’t take the mosey out of the moseyer. Now, since I have other things to do, I’ll just mosey along.



Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

On Celebrating The 46th Anniversary Of Our Honeymoon

This contribution is a quicky, so its composition definitely will be edited and updated just as conveniently soon after my soulmate and I return from celebrating our anniversary at a faraway restaurant. My beloved Bengal Tiger and her partner The Bear in a “death do us part” vow of eternal love, will be honored to share with you a few others photos from our “On the road....again!” adventures.



The Tiger and The Bear at East West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii circa 1970



The Bengal Tiger in Cape Verde, circa 1988

She is pointing out a large bumplike rock that is a geomorphological anomaly known as a carbonatite



Pellek family portrait, 1989



Granddaughter Jaelyn (Mushroom) Hunt, circa 2009; the other love of our lives.

A family portrait including daughter Lucy Pellek will be posted after its discovery in its current hiding place. As the first edit of this quicky blog entry, executed about 14 hours after the story was posted, Footloose Forester went rummaging around in his photo albums for appropriate family photos in which Lucy is shown; and in which some of our family pets are on display for all the world to love as much as we do.



Lucy Pellek at age 4

Her mom, the Bengal Tiger, made both the dress and the doll

Did you ever notice how the powerful editorial tool within LegacyStories.org allows you to add photos, slides, scanned copies of keepsake documents; and even live video strips; as part and parcel of a running story? And to make edits even years after posting the story, as a way to correct something or include important updates. We are witnessing the evolution of the modern autobiography. The **Footloose Forester**, for one, does not want to let computer technology go to waste. Nor does he want his family history to disappear if he is willing and able to do something about it. Just in case elderly readers may think that old dogs can't learn new tricks, this old geezer who calls himself the **Footloose Forester** is, at this very moment, demonstrating that it can be done. So, without further ado, he will continue updating--with photos, a few of the highlights of his very, very, very happy Honeymoon with his precious Bengal Tiger.

After **Footloose Forester** finally got wise enough to put information on the back of otherwise blank photo prints, here is what he read on the back of one of them.... "Lucy Pellek, 1989 enjoying a Sunday outing near Jacmel. We didn't wade across--we chose to ford the stream in a 4x4 truck." A made-up story? The evidence and memory jolter was on the reverse side of that photo. Please let me now pause in this narrative while I scan the back side of the photo; convert it into a digitized computer file, upload it into my photo album; and then insert it into this story.



Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

There Is No “I” In Team

Funny how sometimes the choice of a default template from which to begin[®] a chronicle turns out to be a common thread that stitches other stories together. The first choice as a story template for this current chronicle happened to carry the title, “The Terminals and The Tarmacs”, referring to a past story about airplanes and flying out of various terminals around the world.

This chronicle is also about airplanes, flying, and fliers. The template used to start it may have been chosen coincidentally, but the following chronicle is very much about flying machines and those brave souls who were in them.

The first theme is a non-starter as a story. It was going to be about a man who flew 29 missions as a bombardier/navigator in a B-26 over Germany in World War II; and lived to tell his story. The story was aborted at the request of his wife who did not want to have him anguished by reliving the past. As one of the quiet heroes in our neighborhood, the former bombardier/navigator himself didn’t think there was a story there; and summed up his feelings by telling the **Footloose Forester** that, as only one member of a crew, he was simply doing his job as part of a team; and there is no “I” in the word “team.” Sadly, my neighbor passed away early in 2017 and his story never got published.

The slower and equally vulnerable aircraft models flown by Chief Warrant Officer Mike Vandever in Viet Nam were part of his personal legacy and the source of many vivid memories; and more than a few hair-raising stories. But as another one of those quiet heroes who may never bring up the subject unless pressed, he may well blend in unnoticed at the local shopping mall; and might choose to remain silent when the subject of war comes up. Yet, his legacy of patriotism deserves to be shared with his family and people who are proud to know him. All soldiers, marines, sailors, and airmen have stories to tell; even if they don’t always tell them.

When asked if his Huey UH-1B helicopter gunships were ever hit by ground fire, Mike Vandever replied in the affirmative. His first response related to the occasions when he noted the presence of bullet holes in his craft when he conducted his post-mission inspections. He said that he had not heard the bullets hit his ship or feel their thud as they impacted. Then, and without emotion in his voice, he acknowledged that the most he had adsorbed on a mission was 54 bullet holes, but managed to fly his crippled ship back home. That statement was made without any display of passion or animation. He went on a combat mission; he got shot up; and he

returned to fight another day. Cold ice water in his veins? Maybe. But the reader should be aware that Mike Vandever has not yet come to grips with the prospect of a visit to the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. He tried twice, but verged on breaking down even before getting close. Real men cry and Mike Vandever is a real man. General Dwight Eisenhower acknowledged weeping when he visited the American Cemetery at Normandy. Tears in a man's eyes are a sign of humanity.

CW4 Vandever joined the US Army to be a medic. He was well qualified to assume that role, since he had been working in a hospital since the age of 14 and was well aware what might be expected of him as a soldier. Only one month to the day after getting married, he was inducted into the Army in Detroit and shipped off to Ft. Knox, Kentucky for basic training. But he got bounced around and landed up in Ft. Ord, California to complete his training. After basic, he was sent to Ft. Sam Houston, Texas for AIT (Advanced Individual Training) as a medic. Because of his unique earlier hospital experience, he also qualified for additional schooling and training at Valley Forge General Hospital in Pennsylvania. He loved the experience and valued the additional training. Soon afterward, Mike was assigned, in early in 1967, to a battalion aid station near Cat Lai, Viet Nam.

Mike Vandever's posting to the 199th Light Infantry Brigade headquartered at Phu Loi was under the command of a Brigadier General, a bit unusual since most brigades were commanded by a Colonel. As a detached unit that was outside the regular chain of command, the role of the 199th did not fit the mold of a standard infantry brigade. It was composed of three battalions of infantry, one battalion of artillery batteries equipped with 105mm howitzers; and the support group of a forward area field hospital, headquarters section; and transport vehicles. Some of the facilities were fairly comfortable, including buildings with windows and even air conditioning. But that was not always the case, especially for the adventurous Mike Vandever. He volunteered for more dangerous duty.

At that time he was a foot soldier and was happy to be doing his patriotic duty, in addition to helping in saving lives. Near the end of his tour in Viet Nam, however; he did something that he now reflects back on as somewhat foolish. He volunteered to join a special jungle recon group known as the LRRPs, for Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols.

He was still a medic at Cat Lai; and the occasional LRRPs assignments were conducted by on-call orders by the field commanders. LRRP assignments were 3-4 day missions conducted by five-man teams that operated in the open, far beyond established perimeters. In Viet Nam the medics were considered by some as the doctors of the front lines; and Mike Vandever knew that his LRRPs comrades were counting on him for every bit of medical assistance that they might need. In addition, and since the LRRPs were combat mission oriented, Mike was expected to be armed and fight, if needed. The 5-6 man LRRPs patrols got to choose whatever weapon they wanted to carry, as long as there was sufficient ammunition available to them. Mike chose to carry an unusual French-designed BAR that fired .45 caliber rounds in a 28-shot banana clip. That stainless steel automatic BAR might have been unconventional in the ranks of combat soldiers, but the .45 caliber ammo was plentiful enough.

Due to his long hospital experience as a civilian, Mike was designated as Chief Medic in his LRRPs unit. When he was back at base camp, he was just one of the regular guys who wore hospital smocks and did not carry a weapon. On LRRPs missions, however; the memories of the silence of the jungles where they hid manifested into vivid recollections that are difficult to put into words.

One of the most gratifying stories told to the **Footloose Forester** by a smiling Mike Vandever was about his frequent visits to the Tu Duc Orphanage outside of Saigon. There were over a thousand kids at that orphanage; and Mike and other medical specialists did as much as they could to provide drugs and other needed medical supplies to the Catholic nuns who ran the orphanage. The American soldier medical staff even held sick call there, whenever they visited; and stayed forever long it took to see everyone who needed assistance. On Mike's second tour of Viet Nam in 1971-72, he re-visited the Tu Duc Orphanage. The nuns saw him coming and burst into tears upon the return of the caring and compassionate man they had known. Sadly, that time around there were no needed drugs to share.

Mike Vandever left Viet Nam in 1968 as a SP-6 medic; and returned in late 1971 as a Chief Warrant Officer and helicopter pilot. During the interim he had qualified as a rotary wing pilot at Ft. Walters, Texas and later at Ft. Rucker, Alabama.

When he did return to Viet Nam, Mike was coincidentally assigned to the II Corps region near Phu Loi and could identify places from the air that he had known intimately on the ground. He was assigned to the 128th Helicopter Assault Company of the 11th Aviation Battalion.

Undoubtedly there are many stories about his missions in Huey gunships that Mike has not shared with others. He is devoid of braggadocio and boastfulness. The **Footloose Forester**, however; pried just enough information out of him to share with others a sense of how dangerous it was to direct a heavily laden gunship with 12 rockets in each pod toward an enemy position; and not knowing what kind of return fire was waiting for him; and then coming back again and again; and in the following days and months.

The Hueys were capable of carrying cargo and troops; and in that configuration were designated as "slicks" but in the normal configuration as gunships they were equipped with either rocket pods or 20mm miniguns. The gunships were so heavy that all of the risk was borne by the pilot, who was also the gunner, or the pilot and co-pilot when the mission called for it. They were up there alone—in the midst of enemy territory. In Viet Nam, everything was enemy territory.

Over a 21 year Army career, Mike Vandever flew other helicopter models, including the sophisticated Blackhawks that he said were smarter than he was, but he was in love with the rugged and dependable Hueys that would fly even when full of bullet holes. In addition, he later qualified in the Cobra gunships after they came on the scene. CW4 Vandever retired from active duty at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky in 1988.

A third story about combat veterans personally known by the **Footloose Forester** also turned into a non-starter. When retired Master Sergeant Mike Ward visited our house more than a year after the interview with CW4 Mike Vandever, the prospects of a good story seemed imminent. Mike was accommodating enough to mention that his military service spanned 28 years and included combat in Korea in 1950-51, he mentioned the wounds to his lower left arm from a burst of machine gun fire, and the shrapnel damage to his upper left arm, on another occasion. He stayed in the Army to become an instructor in parachute training and small arms at West Point, interrupted by deployment to Viet Nam (three tours) and finally his retirement at West Point in 1977 or 1978.

What made the potential story a non-starter was his reluctance to re-live some of the events that were buried in his memory. That makes him the second person in this quiet community who shut down on describing his military service, as dark memories began to escape from within. He said that he didn't want to talk about it anymore. Sadly, Mike Ward also passed away two years after this chronicle was drafted.

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By Dick Pellek

Siberia From the Air

You can't see much from the small oval window of a jetliner but if you don't look out you won't see anything of the world below. There is much you can learn if you make the effort to coax out the meaning of the passing scenes when you are fortunate enough to be in the window seat, lucky enough to have that vantage point in good sunlight and to have it all in a cloudless sky. It can be an adventure of discovery but the experience requires a little deliberation about what to expect, what to make of it, and how to package everything into a meaningful experience. Some people will be elated. Others will be bored. Some people will be able to describe a few things they saw from the air. Others may say that there just wasn't anything to see. And everything in between. There are no boring passages over our magnificent landscapes but there are boring people who don't feel the least excitement about the opportunities or the experiences. What we make out of it is limited only by our collective abilities to know, to understand, and to appreciate our natural world.

Few people would fail to grasp the magnificence of a high-level panorama of the Grand Canyon or the snow-covered Rockies. On the other hand, there may be little enthusiasm for a passage over open ocean, or even over long stretches of snowy plains. And everything in between.

A fortunate **Footloose Forester** had the privilege of a window seat on long flights over many varied landscapes. There was a little something to remember about most of them, despite the small windows of jetliners. As usual, he challenged himself to seek out whatever there was to see and he was seldom disappointed. The photo below is a glimpse of Siberia from 38,000 feet. It was late winter (20 February 2017) but there still was snow on the ground for about 1000 miles, an unbroken stretch of snow. The in-flight maps and navigational aids that were readily available to passengers on our Airbus 380 made it possible to estimate our location, speed, elapsed time, and other clues that made for fair guesses regarding our flight plan over northern Canada, along the Aleutian chain, and into Siberia. A thousand mile stretch of snowbound Siberia was not an exaggeration.

It should be acknowledged that the flight simulations are only crude models of the dynamics, partly due to limitations of precision as a result of the scale of the optic depictions. From time to time, it is possible to "ground truth" the realities by comparison with ground features. In-flight dynamic maps are, nevertheless, very useful as sources of information.



A seeming sameness from one vantage point is anything but sameness on the ground

Taking photos was not very fruitful that day because there was cloud cover most of the way. Only occasionally was it worthwhile for the **Footloose Forester** to take a photo on his iPad and even then, the features on the ground in the regions with the heaviest snow tended to be smoothed out into large banks of deep snow. The photo above was chosen to emphasize the remoteness and vastness of Siberia. Occasionally, a small city or large village glinted in the sun as we flew by. We passed east of the major cities of Khabarovsk and west of Vladivostok but almost without exception, the cities and towns were isolated from one another and connected by a long solitary road. There was little sign of industrial activity or movement on the ground, although the visibility was good enough to pick out individual houses and apartment buildings. One supposes that people are housed primarily in apartment buildings because of the efficiency in constructing living spaces that have community heat and energy systems.

There was a gradual decline in the expansiveness of the snowpack as we left Russian airspace and penetrated into the airspace of North Korea. Despite flying in a southwesterly direction toward Seoul, South Korea, snow blanketed most of the rugged land in the northern part of North Korea. The photo below was the only one suitable to show some features on the ground.



The northern mountains of North Korea were just as bleak as Siberia

The region was as bleak as Siberia and uninhabited, for the most part. The **Footloose Forester** looked for ice-free rivers but could see only frozen ones. It was late February but it was still bitter cold on the ground.

The temperature outside of our airplane was -85° F. at one point but at 38,000 feet above the snow, that was not unexpected.

The polar route from New York to Seoul taken by our Asiana Air Flight 221W also passed over Alaska before turning southwest along the Aleutian Islands. There was just enough definition in the occasional sightings of land to make out some terrain features and to get a pretty sharp image in bright sunlight of large sections of floe ice breaking apart. To some people that might seem as interesting as seeing a broken pane of window glass on the floor, but to the **Footloose Forester**, that broken sheet of sea ice became a mental snapshot that persists.

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Of Oil and Gas Wells

The American Chestnut log that has been a resting place for the past 33 years[®] on the Pennsylvania property of the **Footloose Forester** owes its presence to the kindness of Ray Langer, who owned the oil well from whence it came.

At one time, Ray Langer owned 25 oil and gas wells in the area, but as he grew older he knew that he could not keep up with them all by himself. Since it costs about \$25,000 to close and seal each well in accordance with state and federal regulations, he kept only ten of them open. In the first photograph below, a newly refurbished oil well stands next to a modern Marriott Hotel and astride a heavily traveled road. Despite the ubiquitous rust that covers all iron fittings, the reconstruction of the oil well was completed less than ten years ago, and retains the architectural design of the original well.

Only the freshly painted green exterior of the collecting tank downstream, in one of the photos taken for posterity, hints of recent activity. Although the trickle of oil is slow, it is still an active well; and the holding tank is emptied about once a week. The dark patch on the ground in the photo below is fresh oil that was spilled when the tank was emptied.

The chestnut log that was salvaged from one of the wells that was once visible from the bedroom window of the **Footloose Forester** was one of several oil wells that were closed when part of Ray Langer's oil patch was sold off as part of a housing development. As the day came closer in 1980 when the bull dozers were about to demolish the pump houses, the **Footloose Forester** went to Ray Langer and asked permission to take a couple of the chestnut logs that were part of the main structure of one of the two remaining well sites. He kindly gave permission. The next move was to go to the construction supervisor to inform him that permission had been given by the land owner. Remarkably, the supervisor not only listened with interest, he volunteered to deliver the logs curbside the following day, at the bargain price of a case of beer. The following day and right after quitting time at the construction site, the supervisor showed up with one of his crew and a large front-end loader with three hefty chestnut logs from the oil well.

Over the years, the two smaller chestnut logs finally rotted away. After all, they were already over 100 years old when they were delivered at the property of the **Footloose Forester**. They were installed as benches and served that purpose for about 20 years. The only remaining chestnut log is still in good shape, thanks in part

to its extra rot resistance as a butt log; and some additional creosote that was applied when the oil derrick was built about 140 years ago.

The flame of burning methane just outside the residence of Ray Langer is testimony that both natural gas and oil continue to seep from the ground in the hills of Western Pennsylvania. From his front porch and down the hill to his left, the active oil well next to the Marriott Hotel is visible. And up the hill past the methane flame that has been burning for more than a hundred years, stands the rusty but active oil-gas well that Ray Langer still services. The photo below is primarily a gas well that passers-by may not realize is part of the living past, but is still serving our needs.

Sometime in early 2018, Ray Langer installed a heavy duty plastic receptacle to monitor the slowing emerging oil at the well shown above. The 1100 gallon opaque receptacle was about half full on the day that **Footloose Forester** passed by. It can be seen from Aten Road, so he decided to bang on its side to witness the crude oil ripple on the inside. It sloshed just enough to suggest that Ray's oil might be classified as a light grade. Just a guess, but an interesting and memorable moment.



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Let's Go Bend The Fig Tree

The Bengal Tiger first coined the words to the love sonnet “let’s go shake the mango tree” when we lived in Hawaii in the 1970s. She sang that sweet song every spring as we formulated plans to go harvest ripe mangos from our special Itamaraca tree on the campus of the University of Hawaii, a full two months before mangos were ripe on the trees of other mango varieties.

More than a decade later she intoned another love sonnet, “let’s go shake the apple tree.” And, predictably the anticipation extended to the shaking of the pear tree, and to the last of the plum trees. Truth is stranger than fiction, thus it was that during harvest season in Pennsylvania, we were able to shake 30 or so apples from her 3-variety grafted tree in the back yard, a few pears from the nearby Japanese pear; and finally just enough plums from the diseased and dying plum tree to fulfill the fantasy that has become a yearly ritual.

Doubtless, some people won’t believe that such descriptions are true. Others may wonder. The least thing that the **Footloose Forester** could do was try to take notes on the journeys into fantasy and then record some of the details in his chronicles. “*Let’s Go Shake The Mango Tree*” and “*Let’s Go Shake The Apple Tree*” have already been recorded in his personal blog. Any story about the pear tree or the dying plum tree would likely be boring because the trees themselves are too small and inconspicuous to arouse any interest.

When it comes to a story about the fig tree in our front yard in Virginia, there are better prospects. It is a small, bushy tree but produces so many fruits during harvest season that we had to devise a plan to take advantage of its bounty. Also, its fruit-laden branches are so low to the ground that the theme song is going to be “*Let’s Go Bend The Fig Tree*.” Since we harvest ripe fruits three or four times a week, we will be overwhelmed when the fruiting period reaches its peak. The plan is to process the figs in a food dehydrator and preserve them as pressed and dried wafers. We have already started with that technique and it works well.



Short fig tree burgeoning with fruit



First fruits of the 2017 harvest



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For the Birds

Just when he thought he had seen everything at his bird feeders outside the rear bedroom window, the **Footloose Forester** yesterday got a treat that he would never have predicted. The previous morning as he gazed over the array of three bird feeders, he was amazed to see four cardinals arrive and begin to scrounge for the cracked corn and sunflower seed mix waiting for them there. He had seen three cardinals at one time, but mostly it was a single male that showed up. We called him Butchie because of the deep whistling song that he usually sang. Butchie had been coming to the feeders for at least three years; at least we thought it was him; one of the most prominently vocal singers in the neighborhood. Miss Jaelyn Alexis Hunt, even when she was in kindergarten, knew him by sound. Butchie was one of the first birds she learned to identify, so cardinals became our favorite birds, by mutual agreement.

Since we fed them year-round, there were always plenty of birds to see outside our windows. There were house sparrows, wrens, blue jays, mourning doves, English sparrows, Baltimore orioles, black-capped chickadees, cat birds, grackles, blackbirds, an occasional yellow-bellied sap sucker, a few Carolina jays, red-winged blackbirds, a common red start (only once), starlings, and a few that we could not positively identify. We even had a mallard duck that paid us a visit from time to time, but usually he preferred to stay in the neighbor's swimming pool next door.

Two years ago we had a turkey that visited us almost daily for a couple of weeks, but just as quickly as he appeared as a pleasant surprise, he disappeared... never to be seen again. And just a few days ago, we starting seeing one bird that we never thought would be comfortable sitting on the low branches of the apple tree. It is a sharp-shinned hawk, who was also content to eat grain from the narrow perches of the feeders. But yesterday was a special day.

For the first time in his life, the **Footloose Forester** saw six cardinals at the same time, and in the same place. The two bright red males were easy to see, whether they sat in the bare branches of the apple tree, or alit onto feeders or the ground. Their mates were a little more difficult to see clearly in diffuse light, but based on their size and color patterns, were likely their mates. But the delight in seeing two more cardinals at the feeders made yesterday very special. Unless he imagines things for the sake of gratifying his senses, however, the **Footloose Forester** is more than willing to speculate that the smaller, darker cardinals are actually a sub-species that resulted from inter-breeding. Although they have the spiked tufts and the thick triangular beaks of cardinals,

the color pattern of their wings is distinctly banded in light and darker brown. Only the pale red on their breasts suggests that they are cardinals; and the fact that they arrived in the company of four other cardinals.

Just when the **Footloose Forester** was putting the finishing touches on this chronicle, he looked out the window to see four male cardinals, and three females. Seven cardinals at the same time is a new high. When we say that we know about birds, we should not be too self-satisfied with our limited experiences. What we don't know is the main point. For instance, where do they come from before they arrive at our feeding stations? And where do they go afterward? We know that birds make nests but probably nobody can match a particular bird with its nest, except in a very few cases. Why do some birds arrive in the company of other species, but not all species? Do they usually travel together, or prefer to fly alone or in small bands?

The delightful episode with seven cardinals has a sequel. A week or so later, a few blue jays stated to arrive on a daily basis. At first it was two or three; then it became four or five. Was this going to be another case of "you ain't seen nothin' yet?" Yes, it was! The **Footloose Forester** confesses that his heart starting beating faster the following morning when a veritable flock of blue jays showed up. Of course, they don't stay in one place for more than a few seconds, so it was hard to make an accurate count. But that was part of the fun. In the apple tree, down to the ground, up to the feeder, then back to the branches of the apple tree, again. There were seven, then eight, then six, then a positive count of eight again. Finally, for the first and only time in his life, the **Footloose Forester** counted nine Northern Blue Jays in one place at the same time. And we think we know something about birds!

Of course, the sagas of the natural world are part of the continuum that we sometimes don't appreciate. Since we moved to Virginia, Thu and the **Footloose Forester** have been gratified to see a new cast of characters performing outside their windows. Now there are the daily promenades of deer, an occasional grey fox, red squirrel and a red fox, probably rabid.

Flights of Canada geese now attract our attention; and the seasonal arrival of Cedar Waxwings, bufflehead and mallard ducks are welcomed additions to our viewing prospects. But the biggest thrill has been the occasional appearance of an American eagle. He sometimes perches on a dead snag of a loblolly pine tree that is visible from one of our windows. In all humility, the **Footloose Forester** must confess that he was privileged to see our American eagle alight from his pine tree perch and fly directly over our house. The sun shining on his white crown was a magnificent sight. This was one vision that is bound for the archives of eternal memory. Yet, as the seasons change, other species of birds come and go. Nowadays, a few kingfishers flit past our eyes on their way to the pond across the street. Just today, only the second day of autumn in the year 2012, our ears heard new songs from at least three recent visitors. It is too early to make a positive identification by we amateurs, but we are blessed to have them as visitors. The saga continues.

Yes, the saga continues into 2013. In late January when much of the NE is blanketed with snow, we were reminded that global warming expresses itself in ways we may not recognize. Yesterday a dozen robins spent about an hour on our front lawn. When he was growing up, the **Footloose Forester** often overheard the small talk about the arrival of spring. When you see the first robin, you can bet that spring is near. Except that the first robins were usually seen in late February or early March. Here, we are talking about dozens of robins in late January. Not to be dismissed as a fluke sighting, the following day the dozens of robins were back. Then, red-winged blackbirds began arriving in large numbers. At first it was a few...then they started dropping out

of the sky like leaves falling in autumn. Within minutes there were several hundred red-winged blackbirds occupying the ground where, only minutes earlier, the robins had been. You bet it is a saga about the mysteries of nature!



About 250,000 snow geese congregate in a cut-over corn field in February 2013

Saga of nature, indeed! On Thursday, the 7th day of February, The Tiger and The Bear saw their very first snow geese. Except it wasn't a few birds sitting there, not far from the road, in a cut-over corn field along Highway 12 just outside of Snow Hill, Maryland. The huge swath of white in the field that we observed as we got closer was a large colony of snow geese. We estimated more than 250,000 of them. Our estimate went like this: the roughly rectangular array of birds stretched more than 300 yards parallel to the road, as we passed slowly by. Birds occupied the field from near the road's edge to near the tree line, more than 100 yards away. Using rounded numbers, 900 feet X 300 feet = 270,000 square feet of ground coverage. They were packed together, perhaps one bird per square foot. So, the conservative estimate is 250,000 birds. If and when the **Footloose Forester** measures the dimensions of the place where they sat, he is confident that the estimated number will rise to over 300,000. Oh, yes. the forthcoming photo evidence should add some credibility to this little saga of nature.

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Daily Visits By Our Furry and Feathered Friends

The four bird feeding stations and three bird houses in our back yard may have been among the attractions to our serene residence; but local deer, foxes, rabbits and squirrels came even before we put up the structures announcing that lunch is being served to our feathered friends. Shortly after we moved to rural Virginia in 2011, we were aware that the daily sightings of local fauna of the furry kind was going to be a part of the contentment of being here, but the added pleasures of colorful songbirds was something we could and did encourage. Thus, the bird feeders were intended for feathered visitors; old friends like robins, cardinals, chickadees; blue jays, and blackbirds. We were also anticipating attracting new local friends like Carolina Wrens, bluebirds and the mockingbirds that are more common in this area. But food is food, and we suspected that some four-legged creatures might invite themselves to share daily lunch.

Come they did, on a routine, daily basis. Our own resident family of deer that make their home in the woods not far away, consist(ed) of a buck and six female whitetail deer; and a few fawns that were born early each spring and summer. They foraged for grass on both the front and back lawns, but also helped themselves to the bird seed if and when they could tip the feeders dangling from the trees. From time to time, the larger deer were a bit too destructive; they trampled the mesh fences that enclosed our vegetable gardens, and knocked the feeders to the ground. We had to repair and fortify the enclosures often. Eventually, we erected a pine fence that now keeps the deer out. It also keeps the biggest of the bird feeders relatively safe from destruction. The big feeder is now located inside the fence, just back from stakes that support a vigorous kiwi vine and the grape roots that we transplanted from Pennsylvania.

These days, only the squirrels manage to gain access to all of the bird feeders, including the one inside the fence that is perched on top of a metal pole. They go about their daily routine by checking each feeder to see what is available. Of course, there are usually some birds nearby, so they may have to wait for their turn. And while the order of visitation to the feeders may change, the routine by which the squirrels take over the feeders has not changed. At first, it was one or two squirrels that climbed the loblolly pine tree to then jump to the edges of one feeder that dangles in air. Or they would scamper up into the branches of the nearby persimmon tree and feed while hanging upside down on one of the upper branches. We have that on video film, but it doesn't show up very clearly.

But eventually, they learned that they could either climb up the steel pole supporting the largest feeder or jump from the fence to land directly on the roof of the plexiglass feeder inside the fence. It was educational watching them as they learned how best to get at the generous rations inside the transparent feeder. Word must have gotten out in the squirrel community, because we went from having one or two squirrels, to five of them. That number could not be verified until the day we saw all five of them in the yard at the same time, staking out all of the bird feeders.

The presence of the squirrels likewise attracted the attention of a local grey fox. As luck would have it, the **Footloose Forester** was able to see the fox in action. Unfortunately for one of the squirrels, on that day the fox was seen slinking off with the limp body of a squirrel in his mouth. An occasional stray cat also shows up from time to time, but they seem to have little luck grabbing either birds or squirrels.

The two bunny rabbits that hang around on the lawns would seem to be most vulnerable to the foxes (there are two grey ones and one red fox), but so far we have no hint that anything is amiss. The rabbits also join in the daily feast at the bird feeders by concentrating on the seed that has fallen to the ground, sometimes in the same general time frame when the rations are loaded into the feeders.

Our little family of feathered and furry friends share in ways that should not be taken for granted as the daily spectacle that it truly is. They are teaching us how dissimilar animals get along in such measured gestures that it is impossible to deny that it is happening before our eyes; and that we are privileged to be their hosts.



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Where Chickadees and Squirrels Compete

People who read some of the other chronicles of the **Footloose Forester** probably wonder if everything that is written is really true. Yes, all the stories are true, although it sometimes takes a bit of poetic license to set the stage for the main points. Chronology of events is seldom mentioned because most times the chronology of what transpires does not change the observations. At other times, the chronology of events is the main point. Like now, when the **Footloose Forester** is struggling to describe how birds, squirrels and deer all compete for the daily rations of birdseed that we load into the bird feeding stations in our back yard.

The six birdfeeders that we currently load with mixtures of seed corn, field grains and thistle were intended to attract songbirds to the rear of our property. We knew that the deer and the squirrels would come, as well; and we see them all on a daily basis.

We often sit in our enclosed rear porch that has windows on three sides and watch for the arrival of various furry and feathered visitors. As the seasons come and go, the bird life is the most varied. Each season has some species that are unique to the circumstances, particularly the temperature; thus as spring bursts forth we see more and more of those birds that seek out flying insects and crawling bugs. Of course, they also will and do eat our birdseed if it is available, which is most of the time. The other creatures also eat what is available, so there is usually a scene of competition, of pre-emptive feeding, or of genuine sharing of what is available. The tableau does require some interpretation of the body language of those who do not speak in words. They speak to us in snorts, chatter, coos, screeching, and warbling. Making the interpretations is part of the fun. An action video embedded at this point would help.

Making our case by using their active images on video film would seem to be the end-all of the evidence that it takes to tell the story of a typical day at the birdfeeders; except for the fact that no day is typical. Although we know that there are seven deer that are part of one family in the area, not all of them appear together each day, so we begin to count them when they show up. The same is true of the squirrels; we have seen five of them at one time, but seldom do more than one or two pay a visit together. One good video of two squirrels and several birds competing for seed is in our archives and is the best evidence, so far, that we have plenty of activity during daylight hours. We will be looking for a media compatible video source program that can be inserted into the story. So far, we have not found one that is compatible at this site. When that problem is rectified, we hope to publish a series of videos showing the furry and feathered friends that hang out just outside our rear windows.

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Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams
Chronicles of a Footloose Forester
By Dick Pellek

If You Ever Go Across the Sea to Java

“If you ever go across the sea to Ireland,” the plaintive words of an old but enchanting melody begin. The haunting Irish melody forms your thoughts into dreams as it entices you ever deeper with, “then maybe at the closing of your day, you will sit and watch the moon rise over Claddagh and see the sun go down at Galway Bay.” Drawing you in with simple words and enchanting melody scores your imagination as surely as if you had notched a walking stick with a jack knife. The notch will always be there.

So, if you ever go across the Pacific to Java, be sure to look for orange sunsets from the volcano Krakatau; and seek out the mysteries of the jungle at lands end. That would be at Ujung Kulon, which translates into West Point or Western Tip in the Javanese language. Walking deep into the dense forest on the tiny island of Pulau Peucang, a mere half kilometer from mainland Ujung Kulon, is not as foreboding as one would think because the now extinct Javan tigers are no longer a danger, neither are the one-horned Javan rhinos that inhabit the peninsular portion of Ujung Kulon and sometimes attack people. Rather, the dozens, perhaps hundreds, of mouse deer, rusa deer, and barking deer found on Pulau Peucang have progressively made the small island less fearful and easier to traverse. Because of their high numbers on an island of only about 100 hectares (240 acres) where they subsist on understory vegetation, the effect has been a distinctive thinning of the shrub layer that normally is very dense in other parts of Ujung Kulon. That makes it rather pleasant to venture into their domain where it is not too difficult to spot them and even to come across the discarded horns of male deer and the tusks of wart hogs. But to a **Footloose Forester**, the real attraction is the wide variety of tropical vegetation.

Once in a while during a dream like the one last night, the **Footloose Forester** yearns for the opportunity to return to Pulau Peucang and to snap photos of the magnificent old growth trees found there. As a game reserve and part of the promulgated Ujung Kulon National Park, both the vegetation and the wild animals are protected. Thus, he is all but certain that if he returned to seek out one magnificent specimen fig tree in particular, it would still be there and he would gain satisfaction in sharing its photo portrait with others. In this day and age of GPS technology, the **Footloose Forester** yearns to mark down those geographical coordinates and publish them as part of his exploration notes. And with those coordinates, the next person who ventures into the NW sector of Pulau Peucang and comes upon that spectacular fig will become enchanted with a memory that will never disappear. Chances are good that using coordinates 6° 43' 49.79" S and 105° 15' 06.93" E will get you within sight of that magnificent fig tree.



The botanical genus *Ficus* has always sparked widespread interest because of the diversity of characteristics found in the genus. With more than 800 species in the genus, the **Footloose Forester** has a personal fondness for only a few of them. Nevertheless, the sprawling expanse (over 4 acres in canopy surface area) of the enormous *Ficus bengalensis* in the Kolkata Botanical Gardens in India, to his favorite *Ficus benjamina* in Honolulu, Hawaii, to the bountiful cultivated fig in our front yard, have heightened his appreciation for figs, wherever they are found.

If ever you go across the sea to Java, and continue by boat into Ujung Kulon, be sure, however; to keep your eyes peeled above you and below you. The 7-8 meter-long reticulated python that is the king of the jungle on placid Pulau Peucang is big enough and heavy enough to devour you. He likes to climb trees and wait for his prey. That prospect alone is enough to curl the hair on the back of your neck.



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The K-Turn and Mountain Roads

Our family has a long tradition of learning how to drive from other family members and we all recall episodes of the lessons. The **Footloose Forester** takes pride in teaching things, and teaching someone how to drive was always especially important because it is just as easy to learn good habits as it is learning bad habits. With the number of truly bad drivers in the world, he was determined to do what he could to teach safety, driving skills, and even attitudes when it came to such an important issue.

Back in the days when he learned how to drive, there were no classes in driver education in our area, so it was either learn how to drive on the farm, or from a family member or close friend. He learned on the farm, driving a pick-up truck at harvest time. Except his driving was learned, not taught. Let that sink in. Things can be learned but when it comes to driving, it is much better to be taught the right way and from the start.

Later on, his father and older brothers taught him a few things, enough to be confident when it came to passing the driving tests to get a license at age 17. But teaching is more important at the outset, since too much is at stake by learning something the hard way. Yes, experience is a good teacher but having a good teacher can make for positive experiences and having no teacher may lead to regrettable experiences. At one time decades ago, Belgium was the only country in Europe that did not require a driver's license. Belgium also had the highest accident rate in Europe.

New and inexperienced drivers probably don't dwell as much on the risks and hazards of driving as they do on the pleasurable aspects of getting behind the wheel to venture off to exciting places. And they probably don't think much about ranking their own skills at that stage.

When it comes to driving in snow and especially in icy conditions, driving skills are not equally shared by all licensed drivers, and winter accidents tend to bear that out. Driving in traffic is a particular nightmare, or can be. On the other hand, the skills required for driving in mountainous areas and on narrow, unpaved roads are not shared equally by everyone. Learning may come eventually, but teaching a few basic skills goes a long way toward building confidence. Mountain roads can be more challenging than meets the eye.

Years would pass before the **Footloose Forester** learned other things about driving in the mountains, on narrow roads, off-road driving, and the limits of the vehicles that are capable of operating where there are no

serviceable roads. That included *On the road...again* experiences in Idaho, Montana, California, and elsewhere. And that is where the K-Turn comes in.

When you must turn around on a mountain road, a K-Turn is usually your best bet to succeed the first time. It occurs to him that finding a good place to turn around is not confined to narrow mountain roads, and there have been more than a hundred times in the past that he wished to conveniently turn around, but discovered that it was not always convenient, due to the lack of suitable turn-around opportunities. But a need to turn around on narrow mountain roads often has a built-in urgency that cannot be dismissed. Good drivers learn how to execute a K-Turn and therefore polish their driving skills. It helps to be a good driver in the first place, but when you practice your driving skills, you become a better driver. There is more than one way to execute a K-Turn, also known as a three-point turn. Both methods are illustrated below but in mountain driving, one technique is preferable.

They teach defensive driving in the US Forest Service. Defensive driving is one aspect of staying safe. Always leave yourself an out, is one of the prime commands. That includes knowing where you can turn around on mountain roads. Such aspects should be included in driver training schools.

In case you are wondering why starting a K-Turn from the left side of the road is preferred, it is because the driver's eyes are closest to the ground and he sees the very edge of the roadway as he/she gets into position. A better look at where the edge of the road is has obvious implications. Furthermore, as he/she begins to back up, all of the wheels occupy the roadway until they come full back. The driver's eyes are also closer to the ground at the edge of the road on the right side and can better judge how far back it is safe to go before reversing direction and completing the turnaround.



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A Résumé Never Read

With the massive outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa in recent months, the **Footloose Forester** was reminded that the US Agency for International Development, or U.S.A.I.D., is one of the leading organizations in attempting to combat it. The fight may be long and worrisome, but the efforts are in keeping with the best traditions of USAID.

Year in and year out, the American Congress has poured billions of dollars into our foreign assistance programs, despite the outcry among taxpayers and even some members of Congress. So far, however; the medical, technical, and financial assistance to the Ebola stricken area has been a modest \$40 million or so. Congress may get a pass from criticism this time around, but the full résumé of USAID making the world a better place to live may never be championed. Some résumés never get read, or even considered.



In modern industry and commerce in the United States, selecting candidates for employment has undergone major changes over the past two decades. When thousands of résumés arrive in response to a few openings, human resources specialists are inclined to screen them early, through somewhat controversial methods. For example, one human resources supervisor told the **Footloose Forester** that XYZ Corporation never even read those résumés that were longer than two pages. A scanner did the job of screening, and anything longer than two pages was kicked out. That is to say, a computer-assisted methodology decided on the merits of the résumés themselves. Woe to those otherwise qualified candidates who were not informed of the hiring policies of XYZ Corporation (a phony name for a real company that has thousands of employees, world-wide.) In the interest of full disclosure, the **Footloose Forester** was, at the time, the Deputy Director of the Western Pennsylvania Professional Employment Network. It was not just a case of making stuff up.

Knowing what works and what doesn't has always been one of the keys in getting a job and then keeping it. The rules change with the times, but potential employers seldom let on just what criteria they use, lest too many clever applicants game the system in their own favor and thus making it more difficult for the employers to decide on the real merits of the candidates. Lots of worthy applicants are out there, but not all of what the potential employers need to know is contained in résumés, many of which are ill-conceived, despite the richness of the past experiences contained therein.

The **Footloose Forester** had less than a stellar record when it came to obtaining gainful employment, via the use of résumés. At one low period in employment prospects, he signed up with a "temp" agency that assured him that his streamlined and recent résumé would be sent out and seen by 10,000 potential employers. The only thing is, he was not contacted by any of them, and got only one interview in a two-year period. Little wonder then that the **Footloose Forester** is not a firm believer in magic bullets; even those résumés that have been crafted in response to known construction criteria and containing the requisite credentials and work experience. And so it is, that the attached résumé from his past has never been read. It was intended to be a record for future reference, just in case a potential employer was looking for specific experience in certain geographical areas.

Selected Resume of Experience

1990-1994

Richard R. Pellek

When we speak of experience, it is expected that the reader will, no--must assume--that the candidates have the requisite experience. But how relevant is that experience? Nobody knows what the future will bring, so we must rely on what lessons the past has taught us. It is up to those choosing the candidates to decide what is relevant. My role is to inform the selection committee that I have the kinds of things that you may be looking for. Included among them, in no particular order, are:

"Major inputs into the Zambia Country Program Strategic Plan (CPSP): **Zambia**

"Drafting a Scope of Work (SOW) for Title II and Natural Resources Management: **Ethiopia**

"Major inputs to Project Identification Document (PID) and Project Paper (PP) for: Kenya Natural Resources Project (615-0247): **Kenya**

"Contributor to PP design of Project SAGER: **Kenya**

"Pesticide Use Evaluation, SAVEM Project: **Madagascar**

"Contributor to Non-Project Assistance (NPA) program on environment: **Madagascar**

"PAIP design and NPA study in forest products sector: **Madagascar**

"Project orientation assessment, natural resources management portfolio review: **Rwanda**

- “PP amendment, and SOW for: Food Production Research proposal: **Rwanda**
- “Natural resources management orientation and monitoring: **Botswana**
- “Drafted concept paper for natural resources management project: **Namibia**
- “Monitoring and orientation of NRM project: **Namibia**
- “Monitoring and steering committee activities in agroforestry: **Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda**
- “Wrote concept paper on buffer zone management in sub-Sahara Africa
- “Drafted paper on donor support through policy reform: “Transferring the Benefits of Agroforestry Research to the Farm – NOW!!!” for workshop on Environment and the Poor: **Kenya and Tanzania**
- “Submitted concept paper to African Wildlife Foundation in support of grant[®] to AWF: **Tanzania**
- “Participated in PAIP and PAAD activities of project KEAPEM: **Madagascar**
- “Contributed in project planning for Moremi Game Reserve Management Plan under the umbrella of a regional SADCC project (695-0251): **Botswana**
- “Contributed to National Agricultural Research Project (615-0229) agenda: **Kenya**
- “Crafted Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) for Agricultural Sector Assistance Program: **Malawi**
- “Project orientation and review of project NRM (695-0251): **Botswana**
- “Participant: Burundi Agribusiness Policy & Enterprise Support Program and Project PID/PAIP: **Burundi**
- “PID and PP activity, project COBRA (615-0247): **Kenya**
- “Project reconnaissance and PID development, Natural Resources Sector: **Namibia**
- “Crafted background paper and proposed SOW in environmental sector: **Zambia**
- “Participated in workshop on natural resources indicators, tools and applications: **Uganda**
- “Provided USAID colleagues with computer disks and archives of cables, reports and documents on environmental issues
- “Participated in crafting a project: Development Through Conservation: **Uganda**
- “Drafted SOW for multi-disciplinary team of environmentalists: **Zambia**
- “Wrote concept paper on natural resources, for Mission strategy portfolio: **Namibia**

- “Participated in PAAD activity, KEAPEM project in support of biodiversity: **Madagascar**
- “Revised IEE for Agricultural Sector Assistance Program: **Malawi**
- “Monitored NRM Project (690-0251) and assisted Mission in preparation of API: **Botswana**
- “Developed concept papers: USAID and GIS; USAID Strategy on Forest Resource Utilization; Environmental Staffing and the Role of NPA in the 1990s
- “Participated in USAID workshop on environmental procedures: **Namibia**
- “Project review and implementation: Anjouan Sustainable Agricultural Project: **Comoros**
- “Project Evaluation, Anjouan ASAP: **Comoros**
- “Participated as manager and represented REDSO/ESA in USAID network conference of R&D/AGR/IARC: **Kenya**
- “Participated in writing Mission CPSP: **Burundi**
- “Managed project and grant to: African Pest & Env't. Mgmt. Foundation: **Kenya, Uganda and Burundi**
- “Conducted sector assessment studies in forestry/ soil conservation for Mission strategy: **Ethiopia**
- “Wrote evaluation report of USAID Cooperative Agreement with ICRAF, the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry, as the USAID monitor of agroforestry grant activity in East Africa.
- “Contributed inputs into design of Monitoring & Evaluation Plan: **Malawi**
- “Technical review of World Vision-Kenya project, Morulem Irrigation Project: **Kenya**
- “Participated in group discussions of IFPRI/ICRAF/CIFOR policy/administration planning: **Kenya**
- “Attended International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing Congress: **Washington, D.C.**
- “Participated in development of Mission CPSP, with environmental themes: **Ethiopia**
- “Reviewed Mission environmental and NRM portfolio to support extensions or new projects: **Tanzania**
- “Project monitoring and drafting SOW for range management projects: **Lesotho**
- “Project design inputs to Department of Research and Environmental Affairs: **Malawi**
- “Conducted preliminary environmental assessment of Community NRM Project (632-0228): **Lesotho**
- “Evaluation team: Rwenzori Mountains Conservation & Development Project (Grant 617-0119): **Uganda**

- “Participated in AFRENA/EA Zonal Planning Workshop: **Uganda**
- “Participated in Atlas Workshop on natural resources management: **Gabon**
- “Participated in UN Environmental Programme workshop on desertification: **Kenya**
- “Participated: World Bank workshop on envt. economics & Natl. Env't. Action Plans: **Kenya**
- “Participated in USAID workshop on natural resources/environment: **The Gambia**
- “Participated in World Bank workshop: “Strategy for Forest Sector in sub-Saharan Africa: **Kenya**
- “Participated in UNEP conference: African Elephant Conservation Coordinating Group: **Kenya**
- “Reviewed Title II programs in natural resources management in private sector: **Ethiopia**
- “Participated in mid-term evaluation of Action Plan for the Environment: **Uganda**
- “Wrote proposed grant to the College of African Wildlife Management: **Tanzania**
- “Wrote concept paper on aspects of SAVEM and KEAPEM projects: **Madagascar**
- “Wrote Scoping Statement for NGO operations in country: **Madagascar**
- “Drafted sector assessment, environment/natural resources: **Zambia**
- “Participated in UNEP Conference Between Rhinoceros Range States and Consumer States, Donors on Financing the Conservation of the Rhinoceros: **Kenya**
- “Wrote IEE for African Root Crop Network project: **Malawi**
- “Revised IEE for Grant to Displaced Persons: **Rwanda**



Glossary

AFRENA/EA	Agroforestry Research Network, East Africa	API	Assessment of Program Impact
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research	CPSP	Country Program Strategic Plan
EIR	Environmental Impact Review	IEE	Initial Environmental Examination
ICRAF	International Centre for Research in Agroforestry	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	Non Project Assistance	NRM	Natural Resources Management
PAAD	Program Assistance Approval Document	PAIP	Project Assistance Implementation Plan
PID	Project Identification Document	PP	Project Paper
REDSO/ESA	Regional Economic Development Services Office, East and Southern Africa	SOW	Scope of Work
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme	USAID	United States Agency for International Development

[VGCI] PAAD = Project Assistance Approval Document

PID = Project Identification Document

PAIP = Project Assistance Implementation Plan

PP = Project Paper

IEE = Initial Environmental Examination

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Happy To See The Sunshine

Happy to see the sunshine,
Happy to feel the rain,
Happy to touch the blossom,
Happy to know of pain.
Blessed to feel the sunshine,
Blessed to taste the rain,
Blessed to smell the blossom,
Blessed to remember the pain.
Entitled to know of sunshine,
Privileged to know of rain,
Grateful for earth's wonders,
Thankful for a life without pain.

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